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SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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WHO declares ebola outbreak global emergency

ABUJA, 17 MAY

World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on Sunday declared the Ebola outbreak in Congo and Uganda a public health emergency of international concern after more than 300 suspected cases and 88 deaths were reported. WHO said the outbreak did not qualify as a pandemic emergency and advised against border closures. A confirmed case was detected in Kinshasa after the patient travelled from Ituri province, raising concerns over wider spread. Authorities said the outbreak involves the rare Bundibugyo strain, which has no approved vaccine or treatment. *—PTI*

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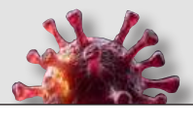

CTI: Limit IPL venues, make them viewerless

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

The Chamber of Trade and Industry (CTI) has urged the Union Sports Ministry to reschedule the ongoing IPL 2026 season by holding remaining matches at restricted venues without spectators. CTI Chairman Brijesh Goyal wrote to Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, warning that the tournament's large energy footprint is unsustainable amid rising fuel costs. It highlighted that chartered aircraft used by franchises consume 2,400 to 3,000 litres of ATF per hour. With about ten flights per team each season, a franchise burns 50,000 to 70,000 litres. The body also noted stadium crowds waste thousands of litres of petrol and diesel. *—AGENCIES*

Indian killed in Ukraine attack near Moscow

MOSCOW, 17 MAY

An Indian worker was killed and three others injured in a Ukrainian drone attack in the Moscow region, the Indian embassy stated on Sunday. The embassy stated, "One Indian worker has lost his life and three others have been injured in a drone attack in (the) Moscow region. Embassy officials have visited the location and met the injured workers in hospital." It added, "The Embassy condoles the loss of life and is working with the company management and local authorities," though it did not identify the victims. *—PTI*

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Father & 2 sons drown in farm pond in Kolar

KOLAR, 17 MAY

A man and his two sons drowned in a Krishi Honda (farm pond) in Kolar district on Sunday amid rising incidents of such deaths during summer. Srinivas, 45, and his sons Chetan, 15, and Rajesh, 9, had gone for a swim in a pond at Nakkanahalli village when they drowned. Reports said algae had formed on the polythene lining of the pond, making the sides slippery and preventing them from climbing out. Increasing temperatures in the district have led more people to go swimming in Krishi Honda. Kolar DC MR Ravi directed people to install fencing around farm ponds. *—SALAR*

K'taka is 1st state to shift to alcohol-based liquor tax

Popular brands & IML hit as State revises liquor duties

BENGALURU, 17 MAY

The Karnataka government has implemented an Alcohol-in-Beverage (AIB)-based excise duty structure in the state and revised the rates of liquor.

The revised rates notified by the Excise Department include popular Indian Made Liquor (IML) brands and beer brands, with prices varying according to slab structures, pack sizes and alcohol content. Some popular brands affected include Royal Stag, Blender's Pride, Old Monk, McDowell's No.1, Signature, Smirnoff, Magic Moments, Officer's Choice and DSP Black.

In a press note issued on Sunday, the State Excise Department said the new taxation structure, which has been done for the first time in India in line with Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's 2026-27 Budget, was aimed at rationalising liquor pricing, making alcoholic beverages available at cheaper rates for consumers in Karnataka and ensuring that it is lower and relatively equal to that of the neighbouring states prices with neighbouring states, including Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra and Kerala.

"For the first time in India, the AIB-based excise duty structure has been implemented in Karnataka from May 11, 2026. It is globally recognised as the gold standard for alcohol taxation," the department said.

Under the new policy, the government-administered price fixation has been completely deregulated, it said, and added that product placement within slabs has been left to the producers based on market considerations.

According to the government notification dated 8 May, 2026, IML slabs have been rationalised and reduced from the earlier 16 slabs to eight slabs. *—PTI*

KEY CHANGES

Price increase by **20-30%:** Indian Made Liquor (IML) such as 80 ml tetra packs of whiskey, rum, brandy, gin, and vodka.

Cheaper by **RS 20-75** for 650ml bottles: Kingfisher Premium, Kingfisher Ultra, Budweiser, UB Export, and Heineken.

Auto-rickshaws queue up at a CNG station amid a shortage linked to the ongoing West Asian conflict affecting the global energy supply chain, in Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh *—PTI*

CNG prices hiked in Delhi for second time in 48 hours

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

CNG prices were hiked by Rs 1 per kg on Sunday in the Delhi-NCR region, the second increase in rates in 48 hours.

CNG now costs Rs 80.09 per kg in the national capital, according to Indraprastha Gas Ltd, the country's biggest city gas firm.

The rate hike comes within days of Rs 2 per kg increase in rates on Thursday.

Rates of gas piped to household kitchens, called piped natural gas, however, remain unchanged.

IGL said, "The retail selling price of CNG has been increased by Re 1/kg wef 6 am on 17.05.2026 in all geographical areas (GAs) of IGL".

"The revision in retail prices of CNG has been effected only to marginally offset the impact of increase in input gas cost along with steep appreciation of USD," it said.

The Delhi government has advised private companies and organisations to adopt a two-day work-from-home policy, make changes to office timings, and urge employees to avail car pooling and public transport to support the fuel-saving efforts amid global uncertainties.

Private entities involved in essential, emergency services like hospitals and other health establishments, electricity, water, sanitation and related municipal services, were not covered by the advisory issued by the Delhi labour department. *—PTI*

Won't impact CBSE marks: Edu ministry on On-Screen Marking

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

The Ministry of Education on Sunday dismissed concerns about On-Screen Marking (OSM) affecting students' scores in CBSE class 12 exams and announced that the revaluation and answer sheet verification charges have been reduced to Rs 100 each.

According to officials, the decision has been taken to ease the anxiety of students. They, however, maintained that the OSM is foolproof and a norm followed internationally to conduct transparent evaluation.

At a press conference, School Education Secretary, Ministry of Education, Sanjay Kumar said, "98 lakh sheets scanned were for class 12, three levels of security were followed during the process. It was found that despite repeated scanning, there were still some legibility issues because the ink used in some answer sheets was of a very light colour. Even after scanning, those scripts could not be made fully legible."

—ANI

"In such cases, the examiners were instructed to evaluate the scripts manually and award marks accordingly. More than 13,000 such answer sheets were separately identified and manually checked. After manual evaluation, the marks obtained were entered into the system.

"Special attention was given to the security levels and related issues so that the marking carried out through on-screen evaluation remained accurate, completely transparent and fair," he added.

Kumar's comments came amid concerns being raised by students and parents that the drop in pass percentage in class 12 and scores is due to the OSM, which was conducted for the first time for CBSE board exams. *—PTI*

Satheesan to be sworn in today, announces Cabinet

T'PURAM, 17 MAY

Kerala Chief Minister-designate VD Satheesan unveiled a 20 member cabinet on Sunday, a day ahead of the swearing-in of the new government. The Cabinet comprised experienced leaders and 14 first-time ministers, including two women and two members of the Scheduled Caste community.

Addressing a press conference after submitting the list of ministers to Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar at Lok Bhavan, Satheesan said the names were finalised after discussions among alliance leaders, taking into account social and regional balance within the UDF's coalition. *—PTI*

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WITH HARYANA HOSPITAL LOCKED, WOMAN DELIVERS BABY IN PARK

FARIDABAD, 17 MAY

A woman delivered her baby in a park inside a government hospital in Haryana's Faridabad after her family allegedly found the main gate locked and no medical staff available during the night

Balesh, a resident of Badoli village, was taken to the 30-bed First Referral Unit hospital in Sector 3 after going into labour around 1.40 am on Saturday. Her family said the hospital gate was locked and repeated calls for help went unanswered. After entering through another gate and failing to find doctors or nurses, the family assisted the delivery in the hospital park using a mobile phone torch. The woman gave birth to her third son with the help of a relative. The incident triggered outrage and prompted an official inquiry into alleged negligence.

Authorities suspended two staff members and ordered that the hospital's main gate remain open at night. *—Agencies*

100S OF EPIC, AADHAAR CARDS FOUND IN WB

KOLKATA, 17 MAY

Police in West Bengal launched investigations on Sunday after Electoral Photo Identity Cards (EPICs), Aadhaar cards and other documents were recovered in separate incidents in West Bengal.

In Birbhum's Nanoor block, locals found several voter ID cards scattered in a field near the residence of former BLO Hiranyaprabha Mete Maji. Police questioned Maji, who said she had collected old voter cards while distributing new ones during her tenure from 2012 to 2025 but never deposited them.

In Bidhannagar, police recovered over 100 Aadhaar cards, PAN cards and land documents from a TMC office in Basanti Devi Colony. BJP leaders alleged the office was being used for illegal activities and claimed residents' identity documents had been retained there. Police seized began a probe. *—PTI*

Taliban allows child marriage, says 'silence means yes'

KABUL, 17 MAY

The Taliban has issued a new family law decree permitting the silence of a "virgin girl" after puberty to be considered consent for marriage. The 31-article regulation, titled 'Principles of Separation Between Spouses', was approved by Taliban leader Hibatullah Akhundzada. It covers marriages involving minors, annulments, and male guardianship. Published in mid-May, it details procedures for dissolving marriages in cases like child marriage, missing husbands, forced separation, breastfeeding relations, and adultery accusations, according to Amu TV.

The rules give fathers authority over child marriages. Marriages involving female children may be annulled after puberty with Taliban court approval. Silence from a girl after puberty can be seen as consent, but not from boys or previously married women. Rights groups say these rules institutionalise existing practices, including promising infants to settle debts, with payments from $500 to $3,000.

Critics condemn the policies, with Fahima Mahomed stating, "Child marriage is not marriage in any meaningful sense." *—Agencies*

'VIBRANT DEMOCRACY'

MEA snaps at query on press, minority freedom

THE HAGUE, 17 MAY

India has flatly rejected allegations of declining media freedom and erosion of religious and minority rights, asserting that the country is a "vibrant democracy" that guarantees free speech to all.

The remarks were made by Sibi George, Secretary (West) in the Ministry of External Affairs, while responding to questions from two Dutch reporters who cited comments reportedly made by the Netherlands Prime Minister Rob Jetten, expressing concern at a perceived slide in freedom of expression in India.

George was speaking to the media on Saturday evening in the Dutch capital regarding Prime Minister Narendra Modi's two-day visit to the Netherlands. It is not immediately clear whether Jetten had made the remarks.

MEA Secretary (West) Ambassador Sibi George with Uzbekistan First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Bakhromjon Aloev *—PTI*

However, in a social media post, Jetten said: "Both India and the Netherlands attach great importance to democracy, good governance and a world order based on rules and justice."

Rebutting the allegations, George told the press: "We face these kinds of questions basically because of the lack of understanding of the person who asks the question. India is a country of 1.4 billion people, the largest populated country in the world."

George highlighted how India belongs to a civilisation that is five millennia old and the country's cultural, religious and linguistic diversity. "There is no other country in the world in which four religions have originated - Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism - and flourished." *—PTI*

>>>India, Netherlands ink 7 deals on Page 3

India nervously eyes China's port in Sri Lanka

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

India is closely monitoring Sri Lanka's decision to offer foreign investors control of Mattala Rajapaksa International Airport (MRIA) near the China-controlled Hambantota port, which could open opportunities for Indian firms seeking a strategic foothold in the Indian Ocean. The Sri Lankan government has called for expressions of interest by June 9 to operate MRIA under a 30-year build-operate-transfer (BOT) model.

Launched in 2013, the USD 209 million project funded by China struggled with passenger traffic and airline commitments, earning the nickname "world's emptiest airport." The new EoI invites strategic investors for aerodrome management or landside development, including MRO facilities, logistics parks, solar farms, and hotels.

Colombo port *PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA*

Experts say the project holds strategic importance for India, especially amid China's expanding influence. They highlight Mattala's long runways and uncongested airspace as ideal for an MRO hub serving Indian carriers, reducing costs and establishing an Indian Ocean base.

The landside development offers 238 hectares for industrial and logistics projects. Sri Lanka's openness to Indian investment makes this a rare regional opportunity. *—PTI*

—SALAR

Conference on 'Women as nation builders' held

BENGALURU, 17 MAYU

The Women's Wing of Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Jakkur, organised a conference on "Women as Nation Builders" in Bengaluru on Sunday, bringing together prominent voices from literature, administration, media and spirituality. The event at Visthara - Urban Boutique Hotel was attended by International Booker Prize 2025 awardee Banu Mushtaq and Bengaluru Rural Deputy Commissioner Anuradha K N. The conference, presided over by Rakhiba Iqbal, focused on women's role in building a peaceful and progressive society through leadership, education, media, spirituality and social service. Guests included B K Roopa, Ayesha Khanum, Ananya N K and Ruman Rizwan. Participation in the event was exclusively for women.
—SALAR NEWS

IN AUSTERITY

Congress MLA NA Haris rode an e-bike, not his car, to inspect works at Vinayaka Nagar on Sunday —*INSTA*

Man kills his brother over family dispute

RAICHUR, 17 MAY

Sridhar, 27, allegedly murdered his elder brother — Basavaraj, 32 — over a family dispute at their home in Lingsugur, Raichur district.

Basavaraj would often visit their mother while intoxicated. On the day of the incident argument escalated, and Sridhar allegedly suffocated his brother with a pillow.

To conceal the crime, Sridhar allegedly hung Basavaraj's body from a fan using a saree to stage a suicide, and broke the room latch to support the false narrative.

He took Basavaraj to the hospital, claiming he might still be alive. Doctors, however, confirmed he had died. Basavaraj's father, Vasudev, filed a complaint with Lingsugur Police.

A team led by DYSP Arunangshu Giri, Dattatreya Karnad, and PI Hosakerappa probed the scene. During questioning, Sridhar's involvement came out and he was taken into custody. *—SalarNews*

JD(S) wants changes in ONOE proposal

Wants BJP to safeguard regional parties, coalition govts

BENGALURU/ MYSURU, 17 MAY

The JD(S) has requested its ally BJP to make changes in certain provisions of the proposed 129th Constitutional Amendment Bill linked to the ONOE proposal, particularly the special powers proposed to be given to the ECI to recommend postponing elections in any state.

The Parliamentary Joint Committee held discussions with political parties in Bengaluru on Saturday regarding the Constitution Amendment Bill connected to 'One Nation-One Election' (ONOE) and sought their suggestions.

The JD(S) said suitable amendments had been proposed to the provisions empowering the Election Commission of India to recommend to the President the deferment of state elections, while also seeking legal safeguards for the stability of coalition governments and protection for regional parties during simultaneous elections.

"With regard to the Bill, the JD(S) extended support to the Constitutional amendment with certain conditions and amendments, while suggesting safeguards to ensure that regional parties are not adversely affected by the aggressive election campaigns of national parties during simultaneous elections," the statement said.

The party stated that coalition governments have been formed and functioning at both the state and national levels for several decades, and "there is a need for legal protection to ensure stability".

"Therefore, it also suggested incorporating legal safeguards for the stability of coalition governments in the proposed Constitutional amendment," the party, headed by former prime minister HD Deve Gowda, stated.

The proposed Constitutional amendment grants special powers to the ECI to recommend to the President the postponement of elections in any stat

According to the statement, the JD(S) delegation was led by M Mallesh Babu and included former MP D Kupendra Reddy, former Assembly deputy speaker M Krishna Reddy, former minister Venkatrao Nadagouda, MLA TN Javarayi Gowda, former MLA KA Tippeswamy and party legal cell president AP Ranganath. *—PTI*

JD(S) leaders HD Kumaraswamy and Nikhil Kumaraswamy at a rally at Chamundeshwari Assembly constituency on Sunday —*X@NIKHIL_KUMAR_K*

- "Therefore, it also suggested incorporating legal safeguards for the stability of coalition governments in the proposed Constitutional amendment," the party, headed by former prime minister HD Deve Gowda, stated.

GTD skips rally at Chamundeshwari

MYSURU, 17 MAY

Days after he met former PM HD Deve Gowda and said he will contest the assembly polls in 2028 from JD(S), disgruntled Chamundeshwari MLA GT Devegowda on Sunday skipped the party workers rally in Chamundeshwari.

GT Devegowda, who is miffed with party leaders, continues to maintain distance from party activities and did not attend Janarondige Janata Dal meet of Chamundeshwari assembly segment held at Bogadi in Mysuru, even though Union Minister and the party's state unit chief HD Kumaraswamy did. Kumaraswamy's son, Nikhil and former minister Sa Ra Mahesh also took part.

During the meeting, Kumaraswamy refrained from taking about GTD, unlike earlier when hesaid he will groom another leader to contest the polls from the segment.

Instead, he continued his tirade against the Congress government. Kumaraswamy slammed Siddaramaiah for criticising the Centre over fuel price hike, even though the was due to the West Asia conflict.

"What would Congress do if they were in power now?" he questioned, noting that a litre of petrol costs Rs 245 in cities like Singapore. *—Salar News*

'TOOK PROPERTIES ALONG PRR'

DyCM DK Shivakumar meets representatives of the farmers' land rights protection over Bidadi Intergrated Township project —*X/@DKSHIVAKUMAR*

HDK kin amassed property via real estate: DKS hits back

BENGALURU, 17 MAY

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar lashed out at Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy, accusing him and his family of running a "real estate racket" after the and JD(S) leader and his father HD Deve Gowda alleged that Shivakumar was grabbing farmers' land under the guise of the Bidadi Integrated Township project.

"Kumaraswamy's brother intimidated people and got properties registered in his name along the PRR (Peripheral Ring Road) stretch," Shivakumar told reporters at the National Public School in Horamavu. "His brother used the PRR road as a pretext to run a real estate racket. Ask people in the Dodda Gubbi and Chikka Gubbi areas. They will tell you how he intimidated people and got all those properties registered for just 7, 8, or 10 lakhs. Now all those properties are worth 25, 30, or 50 crore rupees. He should not be talking about others."

Shivakumar, who also holds the Bengaluru development portfolio also noted that Kumaraswamy himself had issued the notification for the Bidadi township project, and quipped, "Who is running the real estate business?"He was replying to Kumaraswamy's statement advising people not to pay fees and get khata transfers, as his government would come to power.

Asked about Kumaraswamy opposing paying a 2 per cent fee for khata transfer, Shivakumar said, "That is his daydream. His government is not coming to power. …. All he does is criticise and make statements against others -- he has no other work…. Even BJP members are happy that my work is excellent." *—ANI*

B'luru-Mumbai Express flagged off after delay

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Sunday virtually flagged off an express train between Bengaluru and Mumbai on Sunday, marking a major step in strengthening connectivity between Karnataka and Maharashtra.

Vaishnaw said that long-pending demands of South and North Karnataka are now being fulfilled. Further, he announced that the Vande Bharat Sleeper service between Bengaluru and Mumbai is expected to start soon.

Under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme, 61 stations are being redeveloped at a cost of Rs 2,160 crore, with 9 already completed. Bengaluru Cantonment station is being redeveloped at Rs 485 crore, and Yeshwantpur at Rs 367 crore, the Ministry of Railways said in a statement.

On the Bengaluru Suburban Railway Project, Vaishnaw stated that work is progressing across all four corridors. For the Baiyappanahalli-Chikkabanavara and Heelalige-Rajanukunte corridors, land acquisition has been completed, and station works are currently in progress.

Union Minister of State for Railways V Somanna with others flagged off Lokmanya Tilak Terminul Express train from SMV terminal in Bengaluru on Sunday —*SALAR*

- Under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme, 61 stations are being redeveloped at a cost of Rs 2,160 crore, with 9 already completed. Bengaluru Cantonment station is being redeveloped at Rs 485 crore, and Yeshwantpur at Rs 367 crore.

The KSR Bengaluru-Devanahalli alignment has been jointly approved by the state government and the Railways, and the geotechnical survey has been completed.

The Kengeri-Whitefield alignment was recently approved, and survey work will commence shortly. And he said that the suburban rail network will integrate key hubs, including the airport, Electronic City, Marathahalli, and Hebbal. *—ANI*

MP Tejasvi flays 'arrogant' GBA Chief over tunnel road

BENGALURU, 17 MAY

Bengaluru South MP Tejasvi Surya expressed shock at reports stating that GBA Chief Commissioner Maheshwara Rao had asked dissenting citizens to "go to court" if they can't afford to pay the planned toll in the proposed tunnel road in the City.

On Saturday, Rao told a group of citizens opposing the proposed Hebbal–Silk Board tunnel road that "if you cannot pay, do not use the tunnel".

Surya hit back on X, calling the project "millionaire's project for the benefit of millionaires" and said that Rao appeared to have displayed "astonishing arrogance".

"The ordinary Bengalurean pays for it through taxes, loses public money that should have gone to buses and Metro, and is then told not to use it if he cannot pay the toll," the BJP MP stated. "Nothing captures elitism better. Bengaluru needs public transport, not private luxury corridors. Bengaluru needs public transport, not private luxury corridors."

He vowed to continue fighting the matter in court and out in the streets.

'NEED TO CONNECT N K'TAKA'

During a video call with Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, Surya requested for High-Speed Rail / Bullet Train corridor between Mumbai and Bengaluru via Belagavi, Hubballi-Dharwad and Davangere. Surya said this would be a "game changer" for North Karnataka and would bring jobs to the region. Surya later claimed that Vaishnaw responded positively to the request.
—Salar News

Contempt of court: Yatnal on CM revoking hijab ban

VIJAYAPURA, 17 MAY

Expelled BJP MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal on Sunday said that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah should be held in contempt of court for revoking the BJP's 2022 ban on hijabs in educational institutions.

"Until the Supreme Court gives its decision, taking any such step could amount to contempt of court. Siddaramaiah is doing this only to please Muslims while the matter is pending before the Supreme Court," Yatnal told reporters.

"If this is their thinking regarding the hijab issue, then we will also urge Hindu students to wear saffron shawls and apply a tilak. We will see what action is taken. We are also prepared now," he added, questioning the government's authority for banning saffron shawls in schools.

Yatnal also spoke about plans for a new political outfit in the state, saying he would travel across assembly constituencies and consult Hindu groups before taking a final call. "I will visit every assembly constituency, hold discussions with Hindus, and collect information. After that, if the Hindus in the JCB belt unite, our party will come to power," he said. *—ANI*

BETWEEN BMC & VIDHANA SOUDHA

Skin donation awareness event held in B'luru

BENGALURU, 17 MAY

A skin donation awareness programme and bike rally were organised in Bengaluru on Sunday by the Rotary BMCRI Skin Bank, the Department of Plastic Surgery at Bangalore Medical College and Research Institute, Rotary Bangalore Midtown and several biking groups to promote awareness on skin donation for burn victims.

Following the indoor programme, a bike rally led by Dr Zaffer Mumtaz was flagged off from the Bangalore Medical College premises and concluded at Vidhana Soudha.

The indoor programme was held at the PMSSY Building Auditorium of BMCRI and attended by doctors, students, bikers, Rotary members and medical professionals. Sarfaraz Khan, personal secretary to the Housing and Minorities Minister, participated in the event.

Medical leadership was represented by Dr Deepak (Medical Superintendent) and Dr Divya Prakash (Special Officer for PMSSY), both of whom provided constant encouragement and administrative backing to make the initiative possible.

Dr Smita Segu explained the importance of skin donation, methods of harvesting and processing skin, and its role in treating severe burn injuries. BMCRI officials Dr Deepak and Dr Divya Prakash extended administrative support for the initiative.

Riding groups including HOG Tusker Chapter Bengaluru, SIR and Highway Cruiserz participated in the rally.

"The program successfully achieved its core objective, which was to take a critical medical concern into the general public and create widespread awareness. This mission was beautifully amplified withthe help of the biking communities, whose powerful engines helped carry the vital message ofskin donation directly through to the public," a press release said. *—Salar News*

Rotary BMCRI Skin Bank, Department of Plastic Surgery at Bangalore Medical College and Research Institute, Rotary Bangalore Midtown and several biking groups attended the programmes to bring awareness on skin donation for burn victims – ***Salar***

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IYC TO PROTEST NEET LEAK ON 21 MAY

Youth Congress leaders held a press meet to announce their protest against the NEET exam issue at KPCC office in Bengaluru on Sunday —***SALAR***

BENGALURU, 17 MAY

Karnataka Youth Congress (IYC) will organise a "Raj Bhavan Chalo" protest march in Bengaluru on 21 May to demand accountability over the NEET-UG 2026 paper leak.

The group dubbed it a "massive tragedy" that has cheated over 2.2 million students, with several senior Congress leaders expected to participate.

The protest march will begin from Freedom Park at 11 am and proceed towards Raj Bhavan, according to HS Manjunath, President of the Congress Youth Unit.

Manjunath concurred that the primary reason is the NEET exam paper leak involving BJP and its followers. Condemning this, the Youth Congress stands in support of the students. The central government is not taking responsibility. They aren't even committing to punishing the culprits. They are merely making false claims about involving the CBI without ensuring actual accountability," he told reporters. *—ANI*

Anti-Cong posters: Wayanad cops book case

WAYANAD, 17 MAY

Police have registered a case after posters targeting Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, and Mallikarjun Kharge appeared on the walls of the Congress office and nearby areas in Wayanad. The FIR was lodged following a complaint by MLA T Siddique. The posters, seen on 13 May during uncertain political times, threatened Priyanka Vadra, Wayanad's MP, with defeat and warned that Wayanad would be the next Amethi. Congress workers promptly removed the posters. Police are reviewing CCTV footage to identify the person responsible, and the case is registered under various sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Kerala Police Act. —*PTI*

Bajrang Dal activists storm Dehradun store

DEHRADUN, 17 MAY

A viral video shows Bajrang Dal activists causing a disturbance at a footwear shop on Rajpur Road, writing 'Jihadi' on the name tags of two Muslim staffers. They claimed to act on a complaint of harassment of Hindu employees by the managers. Vikas Verma, Bajrang Dal's Uttarakhand convenor, said, "The two Muslim managers were targeting Hindu employees by making them work overtime for four hours without paying any extra money. They also falsely accused them of theft to cut their salaries." When asked if they reported this to police, Verma said authorities had not acted before. SP Pramod Kumar stated, "We have not received any complaint from them. We will take action if approached." —*PTI*

Masked men try to enter Haryana Cong chief's house

CHANDIGARH, 17 MAY

Masked men attempted to break into the ancestral house of Haryana Congress president Rao Narender Singh in Narnaul, but fled after staff members woke up and informed police, officials said. The incident occurred early Saturday in Shiv Colony. Rao Singh's brother Rao Devender's family was inside at the time. A group of four or five masked men scaled the boundary wall from the rear, cut CCTV wires, and locked staff rooms. They then tried to force open the rear entrance with sharp tools. The staff's alarm caused the intruders to escape over the boundary wall. Police arrived promptly. Narnaul DSP Bharat Bhushan said special teams are formed to arrest the suspects. An FIR under Section 330 of BNS has been registered. CCTV footage shows four masked men on foot. Bhushan said, "It appears they entered Rao Narender Singh's house at random for theft and it may not have been their specific target," adding, "We hope to make arrests soon." —*PTI*

—*ANI*

Bandi Sanjay to fight son's case legally

HYDERABAD, 17 MAY

Union Minister Bandi Sanjay Kumar expressed confidence in the judiciary after his son Bageerath's arrest in a POCSO case. He called it a "personal family matter" and assured supporters that they would fight the case legally. Bageerath was remanded into judicial custody after his arrest on Saturday night, following the Telangana High Court's refusal of interim protection. Sanjay Kumar posted on 'X', stating, "We have complete faith in the legal process and truth will ultimately prevail." He spoke of his family's emotional struggles and thanked supporters for their love and strength during this difficult time. —*PTI*

Satheesan announces Kerala Cabinet

IUML picks five as ministers; Cong's Chennithala, K Muraleedharan, Joseph in team

T'PURAM, 17 MAY

Kerala Chief Minister-designate VD Satheesan announced his ministerial team on Sunday before the swearing-in ceremony of the new government in the state.

Satheesan said the list of ministers had been finalised after discussions with alliance leaders, taking into account social and regional balance within the coalition.

He said senior leaders Ramesh Chennithala, K Muraleedharan and Sunny Joseph would be inducted as ministers.

The UDF also decided to appoint senior legislator Thiruvanchoor Radha krishnan as the Speaker of the Assembly, while Shanimol Usman will serve as the Deputy Speaker.

Satheesan said many deserving leaders could not be accommodated in the Cabinet despite the Congress securing 63 seats, describing it as one of the party's biggest victories in the state.

Kerala CM-designate VD Satheesan during a meeting with Syro-Malankara Catholic Church's Major Archbishop Catholicos Mar Cleemis Bava —*PTI*

"There are many deserving leaders both within and outside the list. But a party like the Congress has to consider social balance, regional representation and several other factors while taking such decisions," he said.

He added that discussions on the allocation of portfolios among coalition partners were almost complete, with only minor corrections remaining.

The final list would be formally submitted to the Governor and later notified through an official gazette following approval.

The IUML, a key ally of the Congress, announced its list of ministers for the Kerala Cabinet on Sunday.

Party supremo Panakkad Sadik Ali Shihab Thangal said five leaders had been chosen to take up ministerial responsibilities in the new government.

They are PK Kunhalikutty, N Shamsuddin, KM Shaji, PK Basheer, and VE Abdul Gafoor.

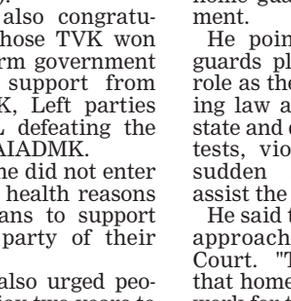
The announcement was made by Thangal at a press conference.

He said the decision had been taken after internal discussions and in accordance with the coalition's power-sharing agreement. — *PTI*

UDF GOVT WILL HAVE ONE OF THE MOST CAPABLE TEAMS, SAYS KC

Senior Congress leader KC Venugopal said on Sunday that the UDF dispensation would have "one of the most capable teams" of ministers and would function as per the people's aspirations. Speaking to reporters in T'puram, he said the names of ministers would be announced before the swearing-in on Monday.

He said that the five guarantees given by UDF will be implemented. The guarantees are free bus travel for women and a monthly assistance of Rs 1,000 for girl college students.



Responding to criticism from the opposition and some caste leaders over the prominence of the IUML in the UDF, Venugopal said they were "attempts to create controversy. Targeting the IUML is an attempt to create divisions," he said.

Regarding the functioning of the UDF, he said none of the constituent parties would try to dominate one another, and that all decisions would be taken collectively. —*PTI*

Kerala BJP to focus on OBCs, recalibrates minority outreach

T'PURAM, 17 MAY

Encouraged by its victory in three seats in the Assembly elections, the BJP has unveiled a 13-point agenda that it said would shape its strategy in the state.

The agenda places a clear focus on consolidating support among Hindu backward communities and recalibrating the party's outreach to minority groups.

The agenda is part of a political resolution adopted at a BJP state core committee meeting held on Saturday and chaired by state president Rajeev Chandrasekhar, a party source said.

The party's document does not explicitly outline fresh outreach initiatives towards minorities, particularly Christians, despite earlier attempts to build ties with the community.

Regarding minority outreach, the source stated that the party has not discontinued its engagement with Christians, noting that its members continue to hold organisational positions in several districts. However, it has moved away from attempts to build bridges with the Church leadership due to the political alignment of the bishops with the UDF.

The shift came after the Catholic Church's strong opposition to the Centre's move to introduce the contentious Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) Amendment Bill, 2026, in Parliament.

The BJP's agenda emphasises Hindu backward communities, particularly through its position on OBC reservation, stating that it should not be implemented on religious basis. The party is attempting to strengthen its outreach to the Ezhava community, which remains a crucial support base for the state's CPI(M) and the CPI.

The party says that a minority community receives reservation under the OBC category and that this should be ended.

The BJP also called for an audit of temple properties and assets, stronger investment in schools and colleges, and measures to protect children from "religious fundamentalist organisations, terrorist organisations and drugs." — *PTI*

India, Netherlands ink 17 pacts on defence, minerals

Prime Minister Narendra Modi with his Netherlands counterpart Rob Jetten during a meeting in Netherlands —*PTI*

THE HAGUE, 17 MAY

India and The Netherlands elevated their ties to a strategic partnership and inked 17 agreements to boost cooperation in defence, critical minerals and other key sectors during talks between Prime Minister Modi and his Dutch counterpart Rob Jetten.

In their meeting on Saturday, the two prime ministers expressed deep concern over the situation in West Asia, especially its serious implications for the region and beyond.

Modi and Jetten also called for freedom of navigation and global flow of commerce through the Strait of Hormuz, while opposing any "restrictive" measures, and reaffirmed their support for initiatives regarding this, in a joint statement.

The two leaders also discussed the situation in Ukraine, marked by the conflict with Russia.

After the Modi-Jetten talks in The Hague on Saturday, India and The Netherlands unveiled a "partnership roadmap" to boost ties in trade and investment, defence and security, critical and emerging technologies, including semiconductors, space, AI, critical minerals and quantum computing.

The two leaders also launched a "India-Netherlands roadmap on the development of green hydrogen."

Modi and Jetten agreed to explore possibilities of establishing a defence industrial roadmap to ensure joint manufacturing of defence equipment through transfer of technology and setting up joint ventures. — *PTI*

I am not 'envious' of Vijay, asserts Rajini

CHENNAI, 17 MAY

Superstar Rajinikanth denied that he was "envious" about Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay and clarified that his recent meeting with DMK president MK Stalin was "purely" a friendship call.

Talking to reporters at his Poes Garden residence here, he made it clear that the meeting with Stalin was not an attempt to hinder Vijay's chief ministerial aspirations or merge parties.

Dismissing that he had envy towards TVK founder and chief minister Vijay, the "Jailer" star said there was a 25-year generational gap between him and the CM and commended Vijay's achievements at a young age had surpassed even those of MGR (MG Ramachandran) and NTR (NT Rama Rao).

Rajinikanth also congratulated Vijay, whose TVK won 108 seats to form government after getting support from Congress, VCK, Left parties and the IUML defeating the DMK and the AIADMK.

He said that he did not enter politics due to health reasons and advised fans to support any political party of their choice.

Rajinikanth also urged people to grant Vijay two years to establish himself.

Meanwhile, PMK leader Dr Anbumani Ramadoss urged the TVK government to grant home guards regular employment.

He pointed out that home guards play an almost equal role as the police in maintaining law and order across the state and during festivals, protests, violent incidents, and sudden emergencies, they assist the police.

He said the home guards had approached the Supreme Court. "The court directed that home guards be provided work for the entire month and ordered a monthly wage of Rs 16,800." — *PTI*

NEET PAPER LEAK

Why isn't PM sacking Edu Minister Pradhan, asks Rahul

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi asked Prime Minister Modi why he was not sacking Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan despite repeated paper leaks during his tenure.

In a post on X, he also questioned the "silence" of the prime minister on the matter.

"NEET 2024: Paper leaked. Exam not cancelled. Minister did not resign. CBI set up an investigation. A committee was formed. "NEET 2026: Paper leaked. Exam cancelled. Minister still did not resign. CBI is investigating

again. Another committee will be formed," Rahul posted on X.

The National Testing Agency cancelled the NEET (Undergraduate) held on 3 May amid allegations of irregularities. The re-exam has been scheduled for 21 June.

"Mr Modi, the country is asking you some questions. Why are paper leaks happening repeatedly? Why are you silent on this on 'Pariksha pe Charcha'? Why aren't you dismissing the education minister who keeps failing repeatedly?" Rahul asked, using the hashtag "#SackPradhan".

'Pariksha pe Charcha' is a programme in which the Prime Minister interacts with students, parents and teachers. The initiative aims to reshape the examination experience of students by fostering self-confidence, positivity and holistic well-being. — *PTI*

Legislatures can grant benefits to MLAs, ex-MLAs: HC

LUCKNOW, 17 MAY

The Allahabad High Court has dismissed a plea challenging the legal provisions granting pension and other benefits to former MLAs and MLCs, observing that it fell within the legislative domain and cannot be declared unconstitutional merely on the basis of policy disagreement.

The Constitutional scheme does not prevent the Legislature from enacting provisions about pensions, allowances, or allied benefits for Members of Legislative Assembly (MLA) and Members of Legislative Council (MLC), the Lucknow bench of the HC said on 13 May.

Justices Rajan Roy and AK Chaudhary passed the verdict on a PIL filed by SN Shukla, the general secretary of NGO, Lok Prahari.

The petition had sought declaration of various provisions of the Uttar Pradesh State Legislature (Members' Emoluments, Allowances and Pension) Act, 1980 as unconstitutional.

The petitioner contended that extending pension, medical, travel and other facilities to former MLAs, MLCs and their family members was contrary to the spirit of the Constitution. A direction was also sought restraining the state government from continuing such payments.

During the hearing, the state government submitted that pension granted to legislators was neither a charity nor an ex-gratia benefit but a statutory facility provided in recognition of public service rendered during their legislative tenure.

It was also argued that the provisions had been enacted through legislation by the state legislature. — *PTI*

'HAIRY' AFFAIR

LeT ultra gets hair transplant after infiltrating into India

SRINAGAR, 17 MAY

After infiltrating J&K to execute terror attacks, a Pakistani Lashkar-e-Taiba (LET) terrorist postponed terror attacks to fulfil a personal dream, getting a hair transplant.

Mohammed Usman Jatt, alias 'Chinese', told interrogators that he found life in Kashmir completely different from what he had been tutored in terrorist training camps and went for hairline restoration in Srinagar, officials said here on Sunday.

Jutt said he had entered India to execute attacks. However, he claimed that he changed after reality of life in Kashmir which was completely different. Jatt, known within terror circles by his alias "Chinese," was arrested in April by the Srinagar Police along with Abdullah, alias Abu Hureira, the longest-surviving LeT terrorist.

Jatt said he had been suffering severe hair loss for years. While he had heard about hair restoration, he believed they were a luxury available only in the West.The officials said during his stay in the upper hills of Srinagar, he was introduced to Pakistani terrorists Zargam and Abdullah.

He said Zargam took him to a shop and Jutt learnt that the shop owner had undergone a hair transplant. He persuaded the shop owner to help him get a hair transplant. He was finally taken for the procedure within the city, the officials said. After his procedure was over, Jutt, who had already tied up with Abdullah, took a vehicle to Jammu and later a sleeper bus to Punjab on way to Malerkotla. — *PTI*

NCB nabs Myanmar's top trafficker of narcotics

GUWAHATI, 17 MAY

A key Myanmar-based drug trafficker, who was operating as a major supplier of methamphetamine and heroin from across the border, was arrested by the NCB, a statement said here on Sunday.

The arrest was made in Delhi on Saturday after extensive surveillance and follow-up operations by the NCB during its crackdown on drug trafficking along the India-Myanmar border, it said.

The suspect, Thancintuang alias Chintuang alias Tluanga, is the second major Myanmar-based drug supplier nabbed by the NCB this year, it added.

Chintuang had emerged as one of the most significant traffickers operating along the Myanmar-Mizoram-Manipur-Assam-Tripura corridor, and has been identified as a major international supplier of methamphetamine and heroin, the statement said.

The arrest was made in Delhi on Saturday —*PTI*

Investigations revealed his extensive involvement in organising cross-border trafficking networks routing narcotic consignments through Mizoram, Manipur, Assam and Tripura into various parts of India and Bangladesh.

He was wanted in multiple cases registered under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act by the NCB and several drug law enforcement agencies. — *PTI*

Fire breaks out at Yadadri power plant in T'gana

HYDERABAD, 17 MAY

A fire broke out in the recently commissioned third unit of Yadadri Thermal Power Station in Nalgonda district of Telangana on Sunday, police said. "No one was injured in the incident which occurred at around noon and the blaze was brought under control," a senior Police official told PTI.The cause of the fire is under investigation, he said. Thick black smoke emanated from the place, though police described it as a "minor" fire. The third unit of Yadadri Thermal Power Station was commissioned last week. The thermal power plant with five units with a capacity of 800 MW each, is located at Veerlapalem Village, Damaracherla Nalgonda district. *—PTI*

—X/ GURDASPURPOLICE

Gurdaspur grenade attack: Police arrests three

GURDASPUR, 17 MAY

Three individuals have been apprehended in connection with a grenade-hurling incident last month, police announced on Sunday. The arrests were carried out by Gurdaspur police in coordination with the Counter Intelligence wing, with a hand grenade recovered from one of the suspects. Two unidentified youths hurled the grenade outside a shop near Geeta Bhawan Road on 27 April; it did not explode as the pin remained intact. Gurdaspur Police, in coordination with Counter Intelligence, identified the accused based on CCTV footage, human intelligence, and technical inputs. During investigation, another grenade was recovered from a suspect's residence. An FIR has been registered under UAPA and the Explosive Substances Act. *—PTI*

Spurned, man throws acid on woman & family

BAREILLY, 17 MAY

A man allegedly threw acid on a married woman and her family after she rejected his marriage proposal, police reported on Saturday. The incident occurred in Shergarh, where the woman, her husband, and two children were injured. The police said the family was sleeping in their verandah when the accused entered through the roof and threw acid through a mosquito net. The Circle Officer, Mirganj, stated, "Shergarh police received information around 6am that four members of a family had suffered burn injuries after a flammable substance was thrown on them." The accused, Umesh Kashyap, wanted to marry the woman despite being married himself. After she refused, he allegedly tried to throw acid on Devi, injuring other family members. *—PTI*

Nagpur consumer panel to SBI: Pay Rs 5 lakh to widow

MUMBAI, 17 MAY

A Nagpur consumer commission has ordered SBI to pay Rs 5 lakh to a widow despite a six-year delay in filing the insurance claim, saying "mental shock" following a spouse's sudden death is natural and it takes time to recover from the grief. A bank cwwannot use the 90-day claim window as a shield when it fails to inform customers of their rights, said a verdict delivered last month by the District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (Additional DCF) in Maharashtra's Nagpur. Labelling its refusal as a "deficiency in service and unjust," the commission ordered the State Bank of India (SBI) to pay the Rs 5 lakh insurance amount with six per cent annual interest from the date the complaint was filed (5 September, 2019). *—PTI*

Protest over demolition turns violent in Kolkata

3 cops were injured; residents say they did not get prior notice

KOLKATA, 17 MAY

A protest against the recent bulldozer action in Kolkata's Tiljala turned violent on Sunday as demonstrators hurled stones at police personnel in the minority-dominated Park Circus area, injuring at least three officials and damaging several vehicles. Howrah also witnessed similar unruly scenes amid a move to remove encroachments from near railway stations.

The flare-up came days after bulldozers rolled into Tiljala as part of the West Bengal government's demolition drive against alleged illegal constructions following the factory fire that killed two persons earlier this week.

On Sunday afternoon, a large number of people gathered near Park Circus Seven Point Crossing to protest against the anti-encroachment drive and attempted to block roads, police said.

Police personnel lathicharge protestors during protest against a recent demolition drive at Tiljala area among other issues, at Park Circus area, in Kolkata *-PTI*

As police tried to disperse, what they described as an "unlawful assembly", a section of protesters allegedly resorted to stone-pelting, triggering chaos in the area.

Several vehicles parked along the roadside, including those carrying central forces, were vandalised, officials said.

Heavy deployment of Kolkata Police and central forces was made in the area after the clashes. Route marches and intensified patrolling were undertaken in adjoining localities to prevent further escalation and restore normalcy.

Kolkata Police Additional Commissioner Ashesh Biswas said action has already been initiated against those involved in the violence.

"Some people tried to block the road. It was an illegal gathering. The police were trying to disperse them, and there was pelting of stones. Three of our colleagues were injured," Biswas told reporters.

"We have already arrested a few people," he said.

The officer in Kolkata said police followed standard operating procedures, and efforts were underway to identify all those involved in the violence.

"There was an attack on the police. We will see who is behind it and arrest everyone. Strict legal action will be taken against those responsible," he added. *—PTI*

Fuel scarcity hits livelihood amid panic buying in Odisha

BHUBANESWAR, 17 MAY

Amid allegations of fuel shortage across Odisha, the state government said the situation was triggered by panic buying and asserted that it would return to normal within 48 hours.

A senior official said the disruption was also caused by supply chain constraints failing to match sudden spikes in demand, adding that oil marketing companies were working overtime to restore normal distribution.

Though the state government has maintained that there is no shortage of fuel, reports from across the state indicated that daily wage earners, gig workers, fishermen and transport operators were facing a lot of trouble because of petrol and diesel shortage.

While gig workers and cab drivers claimed that long waiting hours at fuel stations were affecting their earnings, transport associations said thousands of vehicles remained off the roads due to fuel unavailability.

The disruption was also caused by supply chain constraints failing to match sudden spikes in demand. *—PTI*

Fishermen in Chilika Lake and the coastal districts, including Puri, Balasore, Bhadrak, Kendrapara and Jagatsinghpur, said their livelihood had been hit due to diesel shortage.

"We are poor people and earn our livelihood through fishing in Chilika Lake. However, we could not use our boats due to a scarcity of fuel," fisherman Pani Ghadai said.

The Odisha Truck and Tipper Owners' Association in Rourkela claimed that nearly 20,000 vehicles were off the roads due to the disruption.

"I used to earn Rs 1,000 a day by working as a delivery boy. But, things have been difficult due to the shortage of fuel," said Anadi Sahu, a gig worker.

App cab drivers also complained of losses because of long hours of waiting at fuel pumps. *—PTI*

Pak Army flays Gen Dwivedi's remarks

ISLAMABAD, 17 MAY

The Pakistan Army on Sunday criticised Indian Army Chief Gen Upendra Dwivedi's recent remarks, while urging New Delhi to learn to "co-exist" peacefully.

Gen Dwivedi on Saturday said that if Pakistan continues to harbour terrorists and operate against India, then they have to "decide whether they want to be part of geography or history or not".

Terming Gen Dwivedi's comments as "provocative", the Pakistan Army said that responsible nuclear states reflect restraint, maturity, and strategic sobriety.

"Threatening a sovereign nuclear neighbour with elimination from 'geography' is not strategic signalling or brinkmanship; it is sheer bankruptcy of cognitive capacities...," the army said in a statement.

"India needs to reconcile with Pakistan's salience and learn to peacefully co-exist with it," it said.

It said that "any attempt to target Pakistan can trigger consequences that may not be palatable for India. -PTI

IMPACT OF WEST ASIA CRISIS

India in UN: Concerned over targeting of vessels

UNITED NATIONS, 17 MAY

Targeting commercial shipping, endangering civilian crew and impeding freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz is "unacceptable", India's Permanent Representative to the UN Parvathaneni Harish has said.

Harish's remarks at a special meeting of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UNECOSOC) on safeguarding energy and supply flows came days after an India-flagged commercial vessel came under attack off the coast of Oman.

Omani authorities rescued all 14 crew members of the vessel sailing from Somalia, but it was not immediately known who carried out the strike.

In a post on X on Sunday, Harish said that at the UNECOSOC meeting, he shared India's approach to the recent energy and fertiliser crisis caused by the West Asia conflict.

"A combination of short-term and structural measures alongside international cooperation are essential to respond to the crisis," he said.

"Reiterated that targeting of commercial shipping, endangering civilian crew and impeding freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, are unacceptable. International law in this regard must be fully respected," he added.

The attack on the India-flagged vessel on 13 May 13 took place amid the fragile situation in the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow waterway close to the coast of Oman through which roughly one-fifth of the world's energy supplies pass, disrupted by the conflict in West Asia. *—PTI*

INDIAN VESSEL DOCKS AT KANDLA WITH 20, 000 METRIC TONNES OF LPG

A vessel carrying 20,000 metric tonnes of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) arrived at Deendayal Port Authority in Kandla in Gujarat after crossing the Strait of Hormuz amid the West Asia crisis, officials said on Sunday.

The Marshall Islands-flagged MV SYMI started its journey from Qatar and docked at the port in Kandla around 11.30pm on Saturday after crossing the Strait of Hormuz on 13 May, they added.

Since early 13 March, India-flagged vessels, comprising 12 LPG tankers and one crude oil tanker, have crossed the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow waterway close to the coast of Oman through which roughly one-fifth of the world's energy supplies pass. It has been severely disrupted by the conflict in West Asia that started on 28 February. *—PTI*

HIGHLY TOXIC PESTICIDE KILLED VULTURES IN UP'S DUDHWA, SAYS LAB REPORT

LAKHIMPUR KHERI, 17 MAY

Scientists at the Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI), Bareilly, have identified 'carbofuran' pesticide as reason behind the deaths of 25 vultures in the buffer zone of the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve here.

On 7 April, carcasses of vultures and dogs were recovered from fields near Semrai village under the Bhira range of the Dudhwa reserve buffer zone.

According to the IVRI lab report, toxicological analysis of the carcasses, besides rice samples collected from the spot, confirmed lethal levels of 'carbofuran', a highly-potent pesticide locally known as 'Furadan'.

Kirti Chaudhary, deputy director of Dudhwa buffer zone, who had herself suspected secondary poisoning to be the cause of the vulture deaths during field examination, confirmed the findings of the IVRI report and said "the lab analysis by IVRI has confirmed our initial suspicions".

"Carbofuran, a highly toxic pesticide, was found in the viscera of samples and the same was described to be the cause of vultures' death," she said.

Dr Daya Shankar, veterinary expert of North Kheri, Dudhwa Tiger Reserve, citing the IVRI report, said, "The lab report has confirmed carbofuran poisoning to be the reason behind the vulture deaths." *—PTI*

- IVRI lab report stated, toxicological analysis of the carcasses, besides rice samples collected from the spot, confirmed lethal levels of 'carbofuran', a highly-potent pesticide

Fire erupts in Delhi-bound Rajdhani Express in Ratlam

RATLAM/KOTA, 17 MAY

A fire broke out in an air-conditioned coach of a Rajdhani Express heading from Thiruvananthapuram to Delhi in Madhya Pradesh's Ratlam district on Sunday morning, railway officials said.

The coach, carrying as many as 68 passengers, was evacuated within 15 minutes, and there were no casualties, they said, adding the schedules of several other trains were affected due to the incident.

The blaze erupted at 5.15 am in the B-1 coach of the Thiruvananthapuram-Hazrat Nizamuddin Rajdhani Express (train no. 12431), West Central Railway's Chief Public Relation Officer Harshit Shrivastava told PTI over the phone.

The train had departed from Ratlam Junction at around 3.45 am.

The incident occurred between Vikramgarh Alot and Lunirichha stations under the Kota division of the railways, PRO Mukesh Kumar of the Ratlam division said.

"All the passengers were deboarded from the affected coach in 15 minutes. The fire also damaged the second luggage-cum-guard van (SLR) attached behind the B-1 coach," Shrivastava said.

Railway authorities immediately switched off the overhead electric supply, and the fire was later doused.

The affected guard van and the coach were detached from the rake, and the train headed for its onward journey at around 9.45 am, Shrivastava said.

The train is likely to reach Kota station in Rajasthan around 11 am (as against its scheduled time of 8.45 am). An additional coach will be attached there to restore full capacity, as per the officials.

Kota railway Public Relations Officer Ravindra Lakhara said all passengers were safely deboarded and none was injured. *—PTI*

People gather after a fire broke out in an AC coach of the T'puram-Hazrat Nizamuddin Rajdhani Express in Madhya Pradesh's Ratlam district *—PTI*

Great Nicobar project a recipe for ecological disaster: Jairam

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Sunday wrote to Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on the Great Nicobar Island Project, saying the project in its present shape and form is a recipe for "ecological disaster".

Congress leaders have been flagging concerns over the project, claiming it would have a bearing on the ecology and tribal rights in the region.

In his letter to the minister, he said while there can be no two opinions on the need to strengthen India's defences, he suggested some measures to help strengthen its strategic capabilities around the Great Nicobar project.

He said such measures have been proposed by naval officers in their writings and can help improve the country's defence without much damage to the area's ecology.

Ramesh shared the letter on X, saying, "After writing to the Union Minister of Environment, Forests, & Climate Change and the Union Minister of Tribal Affairs, I have written to the Raksha Mantri on the Great Nicobar Island Project."

Ramesh, who has earlier served as Environment minister, said on May 1, the Government of India had issued a press note titled 'The Great Nicobar Island Project: FAQs'.

Ramesh said, there are also assets of the Andaman and Nicobar Command created many years ago that could be expanded with far less environmental costs. *—PTI*

PLAYING ON A BARREN LAND

100 girls in R'than village find a calling in football

JAIPUR, 17 MAY

A remarkable transformation is afoot in a humble Rajasthan village as over 100 girls have found a calling in football, turning a once-barren patch of land into a thriving playground of dreams.

Every evening, the field in Dilwara village in Nasirabad area, located around 22 km from Ajmer, comes alive as the girls gather for their hours-long practice, chasing ambitions that were once out of reach.

The village ground, earlier filled with thorny bushes and stones, has been completely overhauled into a proper dirt playground through collective efforts of the girls and villagers, and works are underway to develop it into grass pitch.

Footballer girls from Dilwara village in Nasirabad of Ajmer district *—PTI*

The change has been driven by residents like Rakesh Prajapat, who once dreamed of becoming a national-level footballer, but his ambition remained unfulfilled owing to financial constraints.

A state-level footballer in his day, he now wants the girls from his village to carry forward his unrealised aspiration, Prajapat said.

His efforts have borne fruit -- from the five girls who would gather in the field for football practice during the initial days, now, over 100 train regularly, locals said, adding that the growing enthusiasm for the sport among girls has made the village brighter.

Prajapat said he kicked-off the initiative five years ago, bringing just five girls to the then-barren village ground for football training. Over the years, more and more girls have been drawn to the sport, and over 100 join the evening training session today.

Some of them are also playing the sport in competitive arenas, with one girl from the training camp playing at national level while around seven have played in state level tournaments.

Coach Jayant, is coaching the girls. *—PTI*

PRAYERS BEGIN AT BHOJSHALA

MoS Savitri Thakur, centre, visits the Bhojshala, in Dhar, Madhya Pradesh, on Sunday. A day after the Madhya Pradesh High Court ruled that Bhojshala was a temple of Goddess Saraswati, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) on Saturday granted Hindus unrestricted access to the monument for worship. The bench hearing the case, also said the Muslim community, which called the 11th-century, ASI-protected monument Kamal Maula Mosque, may approach the state government for allotment of separate land in the district for the construction of a mosque —PTI

Could water-based tech solve India's fuel crisis?

As India battles soaring energy import costs and a weakening rupee amid global oil turmoil, a Monaco-based fuel technology company says it may have found an answer hiding in plain sight: water.

FOWE Eco Solutions, through its patented Cavitech fuel emulsion technology, claims industries can slash fuel consumption by up to 10 per cent, reduce harmful emissions dramatically, and improve equipment performance - all without modifying engines or shutting plants down.

The pitch comes at a critical time for India. The country imports nearly 88 per cent of its crude oil needs, while state-run oil firms are reportedly bleeding Rs 1,000 crore a day to shield consumers from global price shocks. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also publicly urged industries to conserve fuel as a national economic priority.

Now, FOWE says its technology can do exactly that.

At the heart of the system is a fuel-oil-water emulsion created using Controlled Cavitation Technology (CCT), which disperses microscopic water droplets inside fuel oil without using chemical additives, says its COO Hemant Sondhi.

When burned, those droplets trigger 'microexplosions' inside combustion chambers, shattering fuel into ultra-fine particles that burn more completely and efficiently.

The result, according to the company and independent test data, is lower fuel consumption, cleaner combustion, and sharply reduced emissions.

Sondhi said independent testing at Alfa Laval's Denmark facility showed fuel savings of 6.3 per cent in boilers and 8.7 per cent in marine engines. Ship trials on Scorpio Tankers vessels demonstrated bunker fuel savings of around 10 per cent, while Indian refinery and steel plant trials recorded fuel savings ranging from 3.6 per cent to 6 per cent.

FOWE Eco Solutions, through its patented Cavitech fuel emulsion technology, claims industries can slash fuel consumption by up to 10 per cent and reduce harmful emissions dramatically —FOWESOLUTIONS.NET/

NO CHEMICALS, NO RETROFIT, NO DOWNTIME

What makes the technology particularly attractive for India's energy-intensive sectors is that it does not require engine modification, hardware retrofit, or installation shutdown.

FOWE says its cavitation process also reduces the viscosity of heavy fuel oil without expensive cutter stock or chemical flow improvers - potentially freeing up higher-value diesel for sale while lowering pumping and heating costs.

The company claims the technology can also reduce NOx emissions by around 30 per cent, SOx emissions by nearly 40 per cent and particulate matter to near-zero levels.

It also says the process lowers fouling inside boilers and furnaces, extending maintenance intervals and reducing shutdown frequency.

INDIA TRIALS SHOW BIG INDUSTRIAL POTENTIAL

FOWE has already conducted trials across Indian refineries, steel plants, power units, and industrial furnaces.

A recent steel plant trial reported a 5 per cent reduction in furnace fuel consumption alongside a 40 per cent cut in harmful emissions. IOC's Haldia refinery trial reportedly confirmed fuel savings of up to 3.6 per cent in captive power operations, while tests at BPCL Mathura demonstrated viscosity and sulphur reduction benefits.

The implications for India's thermal power sector could be significant.

Every coal-fired plant in the country relies on fuel oil during boiler start-ups, low-load operations, and shutdown cycles -- phases notorious for high emissions and inefficient combustion. FOWE says its emulsion can immediately reduce fuel use during these periods without changing existing plant infrastructure.

A FOREX SAVER FOR INDIA?

The company is positioning the technology not merely as a decarbonisation tool, but as a strategic economic lever for India.

"With India importing the vast majority of its crude oil, every litre saved directly protects foreign exchange reserves and reduces pressure on the rupee," says Sondhi.

FOWE claims its technology is already validated by global maritime and engineering giants, including MAN Energy Solutions and Alfa Laval, with additional engagement from certification agencies such as DNV, ABS, TÜV, and SGS.

For India's refineries, steel makers, shipping operators and thermal power plants - all squeezed by volatile fuel prices and tightening emission norms - the appeal is obvious: lower fuel bills, cleaner emissions, and no costly overhaul.

In an economy where energy security and inflation are increasingly intertwined, a technology promising to save fuel with water may suddenly sound less improbable - and far more urgent. —PTI

SALAR

A look at the contenders to replace Starmer as PM

It has become a given in Westminster circles that Keir Starmer's tenure as prime minister could be nearing its end. This is because, fairly or unfairly, the UK public has made up its mind – and they do not like him.

Labour MPs know this all too well, having seen the level of animosity on the doorstep during recent election campaigns in England, Wales and Scotland. They just didn't immediately know what to do about it.

But then Wes Streeting quit as health secretary, criticising Starmer in his resignation letter for what he said was a "vacuum" where political vision was required.

Recent UK history is full of precedents when prime ministers found their position untenable. For the Conservatives, Theresa May, Boris Johnson and Liz Truss were all removed eventually. But such a course of action comes with costs: to party unity, to market sentiment, and in terms of how the voters view political shenanigans.

This is why, until now, the more thoughtful voices in the Labour party either kept their counsel or argued for caution. But a significant number of Labour MPs believe that a change at the top is now inevitable.

> UK history is full of precedents when prime ministers found their position untenable. Theresa May, Boris Johnson and Liz Truss were all removed. But this action comes with costs: to party unity, to market sentiment, and how voters view political shenanigans

STREETING, RAYNER OR BURNHAM

From the right of the party, Streeting, the combative former health secretary, is the key figure to challenge Starmer. But he still requires the backing of at least 81 fellow Labour MPs.

A Streeting bid for the leadership would be supported by much of the media, but what many regard as his lukewarm re-tread of old Blairite orthodoxies would limit his appeal with the party membership. And members play a significant role in leadership contests.

By contrast, a likely candidate of the so-called "soft left", former deputy prime minister Angela Rayner, has now cleared up her tax affairs and is more popular with the party rank-and-file. But she would alienate much of the London commentariat.

What neither Streeting nor Rayner possess is genuine cut-through with the wider British public. And this is where the current mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, comes in.

Burnham does not have a parliamentary seat and, although he intends to contest the Makerfield constituency made vacant by Josh Simons' decision to step aside, it is not guaranteed that he will win. Given Labour's current unpopularity, the party cannot assume it would win a by-election anywhere.

And even if Burnham did scale that hurdle, there is a real danger that his replacement as the Labour candidate for the mayoralty would lose to Reform UK. This would allow party opponents to portray Burnham's move as an indulgence at the expense of the party.

Nevertheless, if the political stars were to align and Burnham navigates his passage back to Westminster in time for a leadership challenge, he would be a formidable opponent.

Burnham not only outpolls his main rivals among Labour members, but he also enjoys rare net approval ratings with the public (+6, compared with -12 for Rayner and -20 for Streeting). Labour MPs will be paying particular attention to those numbers.

There is a strong reason to believe that Rayner will have a crucial role in how this plays out. This could either be by standing for the leader herself or through working with Burnham. Either way, she is in an incredibly influential position.

And what would Labour and the country look like under new leadership? The revolving door at the top partly reflects the extent of the challenges (economic, political, cultural) that the country faces. Voters have not seen rises in their real living standards for two decades, and are truly angry and deeply polarised.

The UK is divided on how to go forward, and so is the Labour Party. That is why potential challengers to Starmer really should be careful what they wish for. Much of the political instability of recent years is down to the collective obsession with politics as a short-term and personality-based kind of show business.

But this ignores the worrying long-term developments in financial markets that indicate that there is no faith in the UK's ability to tackle its structural problems any time soon. The winner of Labour's leadership drama may inherit the throne just as money markets' patience with the UK runs out. —*The Conversation*

Keir Starmer, Wes Streeting, Angela Rayner, Andy Burnham —UN

LETTERS

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Here's why love for cruises defies viral outbreak anxiety

Recent outbreaks of hantavirus and norovirus on cruise ships are making headlines, but they're unlikely to dim the growing popularity of vacation cruises, according to industry representatives and travel experts.

In fact, many within the industry still expect a record number of people worldwide to take cruises this year despite three passengers aboard the MV Hondius dying from hantavirus after the ship stopped in Argentina and a recent norovirus outbreak aboard a British ship docked in Bordeaux, France.

"The cruise consumer seems to be somewhat Teflon when it comes to stories like this," said Rob Kwortnik, an associate professor at Cornell University's Nolan School of Hotel Administration who closely watches the cruise industry.

In mid-April, an annual forecast by the Cruise Lines International Association, an industry trade group, estimated that 38.3 million people would travel on ocean-going ships this year, 4 per cent more from a record 37.2 million passengers last year.

Industrywide sales figures are closely held. Asked about potential impacts from what happened aboard the MV Hondius, the trade association said it doesn't comment or speculate on bookings. Several big cruise companies didn't respond to questions from The Associated Press about customer demand, including Royal Caribbean, Norwegian and Carnival.

Oceanwide Expeditions, the Dutch company that owns the MV Hondius, said it doesn't foresee any changes to its operations. It has a cruise setting sail from Keflavik, Iceland, on 29 May.

Veteran cruisegoers said the outbreak would not affect their plans.

"I have eight cruises booked, and I'll absolutely be booking another," said Jenni Fielding, who blogs and posts social media videos about cruise trips under the moniker Cruise Mummy. "Cruising is as safe as any other type of holiday, provided travellers follow sensible health advice and stay aware of official guidance."

Scott Eddy, a hospitality influencer, is currently on a cruise and docked in Monaco. Fellow passengers have not mentioned the hantavirus outbreak, he said.

"The average traveller understands that this is an isolated health situation and not something unique to cruise travel itself," Eddy said.

Current news rarely impact passengers' decisions to join a cruise because the trips generally are booked at least 6 months in advance —PTI

CruiseCompete.com, an online marketplace where consumers making vacation plans can compare offers from travel agents, booked 31.7 per cent more cabins in the first half of May compared to the same period last year, CEO Bob Levinstein said.

"I can categorically say that we have not seen any drop in demand," Levinstein said.

Levinstein said that norovirus — an extremely contagious stomach bug that thrives in crowded environments — is conflated with cruises in the minds of many Americans because the US Centers for Disease Control requires ships to disclose when 3 per cent or more passengers report symptoms.

On a ship with 5,000 passengers, an illness impacting 3 per cent of them "goes completely unnoticed by the vast majority," he said.

Current news cycles rarely impact passengers' decisions to join a cruise because the trips generally are booked at least 6 months — and often as much as a year – in advance, Kwortnik said.

"People who are booking cruises tomorrow are thinking about the holidays," he said.

During a conference call Thursday with investors, Switzerland-based cruise line Viking said demand for its river cruises softened briefly during the first three months of this year after the Iran war began but then quickly rebounded.

Viking said 92 per cent of its 2026 cruises and 38 per cent of its 2027 cruises were booked. The company didn't mention hantavirus or norovirus.

Andrew Coggins, a cruise industry analyst and professor in Pace University's Lubin School of Business, said even if travellers set to embark on a cruise soon are unnerved by the latest news, they're unlikely to get a refund.

"I think if there's any impact on demand, it would be in the long term. If you're cruising in the next few months, you're past the point at which you can get your money back," he said.

Coggins said he thinks the hantavirus story got a lot of attention because it reminded people of the Diamond Princess, which was quarantined off Japan for two weeks in early 2020 after the coronavirus that grew into a global pandemic was detected on board.

The Covid-19 pandemic devastated the cruise industry, shutting down many smaller operators. Cruises didn't see an upswing in passengers again until 2022, Coggins said.

"There are new ships on order out to 2037. The cruise lines are bullish. They see demand growing and they want to offer new bells and whistles, new ports, new destinations," he said.

One reason for cruising's growth is broad appeal across generations and income levels. In a recent US survey, Bank of America found that Generation Z respondents and millennials were the most likely to say they planned to cruise over the next 12 months.

The survey also found that cruise spending rose for lower-income households even as those households spent less on airfare and lodging. Cruise lines have been wooing those passengers in recent years with shorter, more affordable itineraries.

Kwortnik said cruising also offers travellers value for their vacation dollars.

"On average, it costs more just to stay at a hotel in Miami than it does to sail on a cruise out of Miami – and the cruise includes lodging, multiple destinations, food, entertainment, and transportation all in the fare," he said. —PTI

Nepal's Kami Rita breaks own record for scaling Everest

KATHMANDU, 17 MAY

Nepal's veteran mountaineer Kami Rita Sherpa has broken his own record by summiting Mount Everest for the 32nd time, making history. The 56-year-old reached the summit at 10.12am today, according to the Department of Tourism. He led an expedition by 14 Peaks Expedition, confirmed by the department's Everest Base Camp field office. The Department of Tourism congratulated Sherpa. Born in Solukhumbu's Koshi Province in January 1970, Kami Rita began his career in 1992 and first summited Everest in 1994. His 31st ascent was on 27 May 2025. On the same day, Lhakpa Sherpa, known as the "Mountain Queen" and the first Nepali woman to summit Everest, broke her own record with her 11th successful ascent. —*PTI*

Venezuela deports Maduro's ally to US

MIAMI, 17 MAY

Venezuela announced it had deported a close supporter of Nicolás Maduro to face US judicial proceedings, less than three years after President Joe Biden pardoned him. The government did not specify where Alex Saab was deported but cited ongoing criminal investigations in the US. Federal prosecutors have been investigating Saab's alleged role in a bribery conspiracy involving Venezuelan government contracts for food imports, reported AP in February. Saab, 54, built his fortune through government contracts but has fallen out of favour with Venezuela's new leadership. Long described as Maduro's "bag man," he faces charges including conspiracy, corruption, and bribery. Saab has pleaded not guilty, and investigations into his future continue. —*PTI*

'Dilip Kumar, Raj Kapoor's homes may fall in Pak'

PESHAWAR, 17 MAY

The ancestral homes of Indian actors Dilip Kumar and Raj Kapoor in Peshawar are at risk of collapsing, heritage experts and locals warned today. Both properties, declared national heritage in 2016, have become vulnerable after recent rains and an earthquake. Kapoor Haveli, built between 1918-1922, has suffered structural damage, with deep cracks and destabilisation. Dilip Kumar's house, in Mohallah Khudadad, is in a dangerous state, with roofs caved in and walls crumbling. Experts demand urgent preservation; despite funds approved in 2021-22 and 2025, progress is stalled. Residents express concern that heavy rainfall and tremors have worsened conditions, risking major accidents. Heritage groups call for immediate restoration efforts to prevent further deterioration of these historic buildings. —*PTI*

WHO declares global emergency after Ebola outbreak

Fighting in the war-torn Democratic Republic of Congo has severly delayed contact tracing, with at least 50 people having died of the Bundibugyo strain of the virus before it was reported —*X @OMSRDCONGO*

300 cases, 88 deaths in Congo, Uganda so far

ABUJA, 17 MAY

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus declared the Ebola disease outbreak in Congo and neighbouring Uganda a public health emergency of international concern on Sunday after more than 300 suspected cases and 88 deaths.

In a post on X, the World Health Organisation said the outbreak does not meet the criteria of a pandemic emergency like the COVID-19 pandemic, and advised against the closure of international borders.

WHO said a laboratory-confirmed case has also been reported in Congo's capital of Kinshasa, which is about 1,000km from the outbreak's epicentre in the eastern province of Ituri, suggesting a possible wider spread. It said the patient had visited Ituri and that other suspected cases have also been reported in North Kivu province, which is one of Congo's most populous provinces and borders Ituri.

Ebola is highly contagious and can be contracted via bodily fluids such as vomit, blood or semen. The disease it causes is rare, but severe and often fatal.

Health authorities say the current outbreak, first confirmed on Friday, is caused by the Bundibugyo virus, a rare variant of the Ebola disease that has no approved therapeutics or vaccines. Although more than 20 Ebola outbreaks have taken place in Congo and Uganda, this is only the third time the Bundibugyo virus has been detected.

Congo accounts for all except two of the cases, both of which were reported in Uganda, the WHO said. The Bundibugyo virus was first detected in Uganda in 2007-2008, where it infected 149 people and killed 37 people.

Notably, migration in the conflict hit country has complicated efforts to track the outbreak.

Violent conflict with militants, some backed by the Islamic State group, as well as constant population movement due to mining, both within Congo and across the border with Uganda, have also posed a major challenge to response efforts. The outbreak killed at least 50 people before it was detected. —*PTI*

CANADIAN TESTS POSITIVE FOR HANTAVIRUS

OTTAWA: A Canadian citizen who was on the cruise ship MV Hondius that reported the Hantavirus outbreak has tested positive for the disease, officials in British Columbia said on Saturday. The individual was one of four people isolating on Vancouver Island after leaving the ship. The person has developed mild symptoms. Notably, the four members had not had any contact with the public since arriving in Canada, officials said, indicating that it was unlikely there could be a massive outbreak. Hantavirus is spread primarily through rodent droppings. The World Health Organisation has said 11 hantavirus cases linked to the cruise have been reported worldwide, including three deaths. Eight cases have been confirmed by laboratory tests. —*Agencies*

Drone strikes nuke facility in UAE; no radiation detected

A drone struck the Barakah nuclear plant in the UAE on Sunday, but no side has claimed responsibility, or been accused of the attack —*x*

DUBAI, 17 MAY

A drone strike targeted the United Arab Emirates' sole nuclear power plant on Sunday, sparking a fire on its perimeter. There were no reports of injuries or radiological release No one immediately claimed responsibility, and the UAE did not blame anyone.

The USD 20 billion Barakah nuclear power plant was built by the UAE with the help of South Korea and went online in 2020. It is the first and only nuclear power plant in the Arab world and can provide a quarter of all the energy needs in the UAE.

Yet, the strike underscored risk of renewed war as the Iran ceasefire remains tenuous. US President Donald Trump has suggested hostilities could resume. Iranian state television, meanwhile, has repeatedly aired segments with anchors holding Kalashnikov-style rifles in an effort to prepare the public for war. Israel has also continued bombing Lebanon, with the Iran-backed Hezbollah militants firing rockets "in retaliation".

Israel is also in coordination with the US about resuming attacks. Speaking to his Cabinet on Sunday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said, "Our eyes are also open" when it comes to Iran. He said he planned a chat with Trump later.

GHALIBAF GETS PROMOTION

Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf was appointed as Iran's special representative for China affairs, a powerful position that was held by the late secretary of the Supreme National Security Council Ali Larijani. It comes after Trump's visit to China. Ghalibaf had led the Iranian negotiating team to Islamabad earlier.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi landed in Tehran to meet officials. —*Agencies*

US begins $1B electronic upgrades for F-35 jets

WASHINGTON, 17 MAY

The United States has rolled out a nearly $1 billion upgrade programme for its hundreds of stealth fighter F-35 Lightning 2 fleet, primarily centred on electronic warfare modernisation and advanced combat capability enhancements. This comes after Iranian state media has claimed to have struck, or even downed fifth-generation jets.

According to a US Department of War (DoW) contract announcement, Lockheed Martin has been awarded USD 991.1 million to produce and deliver 432 modification kits for the F-35.

The latest package is widely expected to include major improvements to sensor fusion systems, electronic warfare functions and survivability features designed for operations in heavily contested airspace. The existing system provides radar warning, electronic attack, targeting support and countermeasure capabilities through a fully integrated architecture. The F-35 currently relies on the AN/ASQ-239 electronic warfare suite (EWS), which was developed by BAE Systems.

Iranian state media has repeatedly published claims about striking the jet. However, the US is yet to confirm such hits. —*ANI*

France to probe MBS for killing of scribe

PARIS, 17 MAY

A French investigating judge will examine a complaint accusing Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman of involvement in the 2018 killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, France's anti-terrorism prosecutor's office said on Saturday.

The complaint, filed by Trial International and Reporters Without Borders, alleges complicity in torture and enforced disappearance over Khashoggi's killing inside the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul in October 2018.

France's Paris Court of Appeal ruled on May 11 that the case should be examined by a judge from the crimes against humanity unit. Khashoggi's body was dismembered and never found. The complaint was first filed during MBS' 2022 visit to France. —*PTI*

Senate stalls Trump's $1B White House makeover

WASHINGTON, 17 MAY

A proposal to fund USD 1 billion in security additions for the White House campus and President Donald Trump's new ballroom fails to meet procedural rules, according to the Senate Parliamentarian, dealing a blow to Republican plans to include it as part of a bill to fund immigration enforcement agencies for the next three years.

The Parliamentarian's ruling, described on Saturday by Senate Democrats, said that a project as large and complex as Trump's massive East Wing renovation is too broad to be included in the budget bill, which only needs a simple majority — and no Democratic votes — to pass.

It's unclear if Republicans will be able to salvage any part of the billion-dollar Secret Service proposal, which would have funded security for Trump's ballroom along with other parts of the White House, including a new visitor screening centre, training for agents and extra reinforcements for large events.

US President Donald Trump's ballroom project has been the apple of his eye —*PTI*

Republicans are looking to approve a USD 72 billion package to fund Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Customs (ICE) and Border Protection for three years after Democrats have blocked the money for months. —*PTI*

Kash under fire for lavish dates with gf

Forty-six-year-old FBI Director Kash Patel is facing fresh heat after reports alleged he turned an official work trip into a luxury outing involving his 27-year-old girlfriend Alexis Wilkins. According to a New York Times report, the couple watched George Strait and Chris Stapleton perform from a private suite costing between $35,000 and $50,000, while Kash has continued using the FBI's Gulfstream V jet to attend Wilkins' concerts. Kash had also turned a visit to a Pearl Harbour memorial site into a snorkelling expedition while aboard the carrier USS Arizona.

SriLankan Airlines accuses Indians of Rs 22M fraud

COLOMBO, 17 MAY

SriLankan Airlines alleges that employees in its Chennai office stole Rs 22 million by altering invoices, payment details, and signatures. The airline's statement said the Indian nationals in the finance department carried out the fraud over time. It did not specify how long the misappropriation lasted. The airline has contacted Indian law enforcement, and investigations are ongoing. It also mentioned a separate incident involving an erroneous payment to a UAE service provider due to a compromised email account. The airline is working to recover the lost funds and continues investigations to resolve the issue. —*PTI*

Heatwave worsens Pakistan's water problems

A boy drinks water directly from a pipe in the 47 °C hot weather in Pakistan's Punjab —*UNICEF*

SINDH, 17 MAY

The worsening heatwave in Pakistan has intensified an already severe water shortage, exposing what many residents describe as the failure of civic authorities to manage the city's basic infrastructure. People living in Hyderabad, Latifabad and Qasimabad are struggling with prolonged disruptions in water supply while temperatures rise.

In southern Pakistan throughout April and May, temperatures have risen far above seasonal norms. In Sindh, daytime temperatures have frequently crossed 44C to 46C. According to the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD), Karachi recently recorded a maximum temperature of 44.1C, the city's highest reading since 31 May 2018, when temperatures touched 46°C.

Additionally, many neighbourhoods have been facing irregular water supply since many months. In many localities, water is supplied only briefly.

The erratic distribution has pushed many families to depend on expensive private water tankers, at a time of soaring inflation. Families are now spending a considerable part of their income for buying water.

The crisis has triggered anger among citizens, who accuse municipal bodies of failing to provide clean drinking water.

Residents said there were serious contamination issues in the pipeline system. Clean water initially comes through taps, encouraging families to begin filling rooftop tanks and sumps. But, midway foul-smelling water starts entering the pipelines, contaminating the supply. — *ANI*

At least 12 people were injured in a strike on an oil facility near Moscow on Sunday —*X@ZELENSKYYUA*

4 killed in one of largest Ukrainian strikes on Russia

KYIV, 17 MAY

At least four people, including three near Moscow, died in one of the largest Ukrainian overnight attacks against Russia since the start of the war, according to Russian local authorities.

A woman was killed after a drone hit her home in Khimki, a city just northwest of Moscow, and two men died in the village of Pogorelki 10km north of the capital, according to local Gov Andrei Vorobyev. One man was also killed as a drone struck a lorry in the Belgorod region, which borders Ukraine, according to local authorities.

Vorobyev said Ukrainian drones had also damaged unspecified "infrastructure" and several high-rises.

In Moscow itself, at least 12 people were wounded in the nighttime strike, mostly near the entrance to the city's oil refinery, Mayor Sergei Sobyanin reported.

Russia's Defence Ministry said it shot down 1,000 drones over 24 hours, while Sobyanin said that 81 drones were headed for Moscow, marking the largest Ukraine strike on the Russian capital. Russia's largest airport — Moscow's Sheremetyevo — said drone debris had fallen on its premises, but caused no damage.

Meanwhile, Russia attacked Ukraine with 287 drones overnight on Sunday, 279 of which were shot down or jammed, the Ukrainian air force reported. At least 15 people were injured across the country. —*PTI*

UK'S NEVER ENDING TURMOIL

Wes Streeting officially challenges Starmer

LONDON, 17 MAY

Wes Streeting on Saturday formally announced his bid to replace British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, becoming the first Labour MP to openly challenge him after the party's poor local election performance earlier this month.

The former health secretary said Labour risked becoming "the handmaidens of Nigel Farage" unless it changed course after Reform UK made major gains in the May 7 local and regional elections. Streeting resigned from Starmer's Cabinet last week, accusing the prime minister of lacking "vision" and "direction".

The contest could widen if Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham wins a special election to enter Parliament.

Starmer, however, has vowed to remain in office despite pressure following policy reversals, falling popularity and criticism over appointing a friend of convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein as US ambassador.

Streeting, 43, rose from London's East End to study at University of Cambridge and later led the National Union of Students. Openly gay and Anglican, he has spoken about reconciling faith with sexuality and previously worked for LGBTQ+ group Stonewall. As health secretary, Streeting focused heavily on reforming the National Health Service after surviving kidney cancer, saying the NHS had "saved my life". —*PTI*

IRFC eyes loans over Rs 1 lakh cr in FY27

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

State-owned Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC) has set a target of crossing Rs 1 lakh crore loan sanction during the current financial year. To fund its business growth, the public sector undertaking of the Ministry of Railways plans to raise Rs 70,000 crore, including overseas funds, in FY27. A steady pipeline and emerging opportunities across metro and ports are expected to further accelerate growth in the coming financial year, following its whole-of-government approach, said IRFC Chairman Manoj Kumar Dubey. During FY26, IRFC sanctioned projects worth Rs 72,949 crore and disbursed Rs 35,067 crore, exceeding its annual guidance. The company's total assets crossed the Rs 5 lakh crore milestone for the first time in FY26.—*PTI*

Hybrid mutual funds see Rs 1.55T inflows in FY26

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

Hybrid mutual fund schemes attracted inflows of Rs 1.55 lakh crore in 2025-26, a 29 per cent rise from the previous year, as investors sought diversified strategies despite geopolitical tensions, including West Asia conflict, hybrid funds gained popularity for offering balanced investment solutions. Radhika Gupta, CEO of Edelweiss Mutual Fund said, "Strong traction in FY26 as investors looked for balanced investment solutions during volatile times." AMFI data shows hybrid fund fiolos increased to 1.9 crore in March from 1.56 crore a year earlier, with AUM rising 17 per cent to Rs 10.35 lakh crore. Feroze Azeez of Anand Rathi Wealth noted, "Many hybrid funds delivered relatively stable, higher near-term risk-adjusted performance." Growth was driven by multi-asset and arbitrage funds, with 17 hybrid fund in FY26. Gupta from Edelweiss said, "Outlook are positive as hybridswork well for volatile markets." —*PTI*

Foreign investors pull out ₹27,000 cr in May

2026 outflows hit ₹2.2 lakh cr against ₹1.66 lakh cr in 2025

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

Foreign investors continued to pare their exposure to Indian equities, withdrawing Rs 27,048 crore so far this month, indicating caution amid an evolving macroeconomic and geopolitical environment. With this, total outflows by Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) from the equity market have reached Rs 2.2 lakh crore in 2026, higher than the Rs 1.66 lakh crore pulled out during the entire 2025, according to data with the NSDL.

FPIs were net sellers in all months of 2026 except February. They withdrew Rs 35,962 crore in January before turning net buyers in February, investing Rs 22,615 crore — the highest monthly inflow in 17 months. The trend reversed sharply in March, when foreign investors pulled out a record Rs 1.17 lakh crore, followed by net outflows of Rs 60,847 crore in April. Selling has extended into May, with withdrawals of over Rs 27,000 crore so far.

The latest outflow trend reflects uncertainty surrounding global growth, elevated geopolitical tensions across key regions and volatility in crude oil prices, which continued to weigh on risk appetite towards emerging markets, including India, said Himanshu Srivastava, Principal - Manager Research at Morningstar Investment Research India.

He added that a stronger US dollar remained a key driver behind this selling activity, prompting investors to adopt a more defensive stance. Srivastava further said concerns over the trajectory of global inflation and uncertainty regarding the pace and timing of future interest rate cuts by major central banks continued to influence capital allocation decisions globally.

Geojit Investments Chief Strategist VK Vijayakumar said sustained FPI selling, with a widening current account deficit, has exerted pressure on the rupee. "This trend could reverse when the AI trade, which appears to be in bubble territory, eventually cools off," he added. —*PTI*

WEST ASIA SHOCK

Lower tariffs and FTAs will reverse FDI slump: ADB

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), reduced import tariffs and better business environments could encourage higher net foreign capital inflows into India, which have moderated Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in recent years, ADB Chief Economist Albert Park said.

Park said uncertainty always triggers a flight of capital to safety — a phenomenon now playing out across Asian markets. Asia is also somewhat more vulnerable to West Asia shocks than other regions, he added.

"The Asian Development Bank has also been pushing for better city governance — an integrated planning approach that addresses the logistical, regulatory, and human capital needs of businesses, and smart urbanism that responds to the concerns of the business community," he said.

On crude oil prices, Park said they will likely stay elevated for longer due to the prolonged West Asia crisis. Asian Development Bank has projected inflation at 4.5 per cent for the current fiscal year.

Park noted that the government should continue reducing import tariffs to keep foreign investments competitive. India also needs to boost its manufacturing ecosystem. He added that free trade agreements will be crucial for attracting FDI.

During 2021-22, India attracted net Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) of USD 38.6 billion, which fell to USD 28 billion in FY23 and further fell to USD 10.2 billion in FY24. Net FDI — inflow minus outflow — reduced to single digits at USD 1 billion in FY25 but improved to USD 3 billion during the April-December period of FY26. —*PTI*

9 top valued firms lose Rs 3.12 lakh crore

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

The combined market valuation of nine of the top ten most valued firms declined by Rs 3.12 lakh crore last week, with Reliance Industries suffering the biggest loss.

The 30-share BSE Sensex fell by 2,090.2 points, or 2.7 per cent, while the NSE Nifty dropped 532.65 points, or 2.2 per cent. Ajit Mishra, SVP of Research at Religare Broking, said, "Markets ended the week lower, amid lingering geopolitical tensions in West Asia, persistent weakness in the rupee, and rising inflationary concerns."

He added that the surge in crude oil prices above USD 105 per barrel heightened fears of imported inflation. Reliance's market cap decreased Rs 1,34,445.77 crore to Rs 18,08,420.81 crore, State Bank of India's fell Rs 52,245.3 crore to Rs 8,88,862.32 crore.

TCS declined Rs 47,415.04 crore to Rs 8,19,062.65 crore, and Bajaj Finance dropped Rs 27,892.28 crore to Rs 5,66,717.74 crore. Bharti Airtel was the only firm to rise, with increase Rs 42,470 crore to Rs 11,60,525 crore.

Reliance remains the most valued firm, followed by HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, SBI, TCS, Bajaj Finance, L&T, Hindustan Unilever, and LIC. —*PTI*

35% of India's exports go to N America, NE Asia

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

—FREEPIK

North America, North-East Asia, and Latin America together accounted for over 35 per cent of India's merchandise exports, which stood at USD 441.78 billion in 2025-26, reflecting a gradual shift towards a more diversified and resilient global trade structure, according to commerce ministry data.

North America continued to dominate India's export basket at USD 97.7 billion — 22.1 per cent of total exports — though growth remained moderate at 1.3 per cent year-on-year, indicating a mature but resilient demand base.

The strongest momentum came from North-East Asia, where exports surged 21.6 per cent to USD 41.6 billion, raising the region's share to 9.4 per cent. The region has advanced manufacturing industries and is seeing rising demand for Indian electronics, engineering goods, chemicals, and industrial products.

In Africa, exports to East Africa rose 13.7 per cent to USD 12.6 billion, while those to North Africa grew 14.8 per cent to USD 8 billion. West Africa and Central Africa also posted growth, albeit from a lower base.

Latin America maintained healthy expansion, with exports rising 7.8 per cent to USD 16.4 billion, contributing 3.7 per cent to India's total exports. Other West Asia held a roughly 2 per cent share, while Central Asian Republic countries also recorded steady double-digit growth from a lower base. —*PTI*

India to bilaterally negotiate transit corridors with Iran: Moody's

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

Moody's Ratings predicts that India and other oil-importing nations will likely negotiate bilaterally with Iran to secure energy supplies, possibly via coordinated transit corridors.

However, a full reopening of the Strait of Hormuz and a return to pre-war traffic volumes are unlikely in 2026.

The report highlights that geopolitical tensions mean the US and Iran are unlikely to reach a swift, lasting settlement.

Transit flows are expected to gradually improve through bilateral channels, but the process will be slow, opaque, and prone to interruptions. Moody's states, "oil importers—particularly China, India, Japan, and Korea—will negotiate passage bilaterally with Iran, potentially through corridors near Larak Island and Omani waters... A return to pre-conflict traffic volumes in 2026 is unlikely."

Even if safe passage resumes soon, the oil market will remain supply-constrained, with higher, volatile prices. Moody's forecasts Brent crude at USD 90-110 per barrel for much of 2026, causing real

GDP growth reductions of 0.2-0.8 percentage points in major economies. India's GDP growth estimate for 2026 has been cut to 6 per cent, with inflation expected to rise to 4.5 per cent. —*PTI*

Prudential to acquire 75 pc stake in Bharti Life Insurance for Rs 3,500 crore

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

UK-based Prudential plc on Sunday announced it will acquire a 75 per cent majority stake in Bharti Life Insurance for Rs 3,500 crore from Bharti Life Ventures Pvt Ltd and 360 ONE Asset Management.

Prudential currently holds around 22 per cent in ICICI Prudential Life Insurance. The new acquisition will require it to pare back that stake to comply with regulatory requirements — reducing its shareholding in ICICI Pru Life to under 10 per cent.

This is the second exit by a long-standing foreign insurance venture partner, following Allianz's departure from Bajaj Finserv last year.

Prudential said the transaction will be funded from existing resources and is expected to deliver "compelling strategic and financial benefits" over time. There is also potential additional consideration of up to Rs 700 crore (USD 78 million), subject to certain conditions.

"India is a strategically important and exciting market for Prudential. By acquiring a controlling stake in Bharti Life, we are bringing together Prudential's nearly 180 years of global insurance expertise and Bharti's strong and growing local presence to serve the savings and protection needs of Indian consumers," Prudential plc's CEO Anil Wadhwani said.

Following completion, Prudential's Indian operations will comprise majority-owned Bharti Life Insurance, Prudential HCL Health Insurance, and minority in two entities: 35 per cent in ICICI Prudential Asset Management and 22 per cent in ICICI Prudential Life Insurance. —*PTI*

US-Iran war, oil prices key factors in Dalal Street: Analysts

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

The US-Iran conflict, FII flows and crude oil prices will be the major drivers in Dalal Street this week, with inflation adding to investor anxiety, say analysts.

The Rupee's movement, which crashed below the 96 mark against the US Dollar last week, would also affect trading.

"Participants will closely monitor developments in the US-Iran conflict and their implications for crude oil prices, inflation, and global risk sentiment.

Movements in energy markets and the rupee will continue to influence near-term market direction," Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

It fell below the 96 on Friday.

"Markets are expected to remain volatile, with investor sentiment hinging on the United States conflict with Iran and movements in global energy markets," said Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, a WealthTech and stock broking company in India.

Last week, Sensex plunged 2,090.2 points, while Nifty declined 532.65 points. —*PTI*

India's jewellery exports down by 9.07% in April; Gold by 21.77%

MUMBAI, 17 MAY

India's gems and jewellery exports declined by 9.07 per cent at USD 2,226.45 million (Rs 20,825.01 crore) in April following the West Asia conflict, the Gem & Jewellery Export Promotion Council said.

The total exports were USD 2,448.53 million (Rs 20,952.26 crore) in the same month in 2025, as per the data by the industry apex body GJEPC. "Decline in exports is mainly due to the ongoing conflict in West Asia, which has caused worldwide disruptions affecting exports. Besides geopolitical tensions, exports to the US, a major export market for the gems and jewellery industry, were also affected because there is still no clarity on the tariffs," GJEPC Chairman Kirit Bhansali said.

Meanwhile, data from the

- India's gems and jewellery exports declined by 9.07 per cent at USD 2,226.45 million in April

GJEPC revealed that the overall export of cut and polished diamonds declined 19.65 per cent in April at USD 890.91 million compared to USD 1,108.74 million for the same period last year.

Export of polished lab-grown diamonds dipped 15.53 per cent to USD 93.28 million in April from USD 110.43 million last year.

Gold jewellery exports was down 21.77 per cent to USD 841.54 million in April, compared to USD 1,075.67 million for the same period last year. The total export of plain gold jewellery at USD 341.08 in April 2026 showed a decline of 47.06 per cent. —*PTI*

—PTI

SWISS MADE

India now largest market for Nestle's KitKat

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

India is the largest market globally for KitKat, the iconic chocolate-coated wafer bar of Swiss food and confectionery major Nestlé, driven by strong consumer penetration, product innovation and aggressive marketing the company said.

India, which had been the second-largest market for the brand over the last 2-3 years, has now become its biggest market globally.

"India is now the largest market for KitKat globally, and the brand has accelerated its market share growth over the last few years," Nestlé India Chairman and Managing Director Manish Tiwary said.

KitKat has now become the second brand in Nestlé's portfolio, after Maggi.

A decade ago, India was at number 10 globally for KitKat.

As part of Nestlé India's confectionery portfolio, KitKat contributed to strong momentum in FY26, with the confectionery product group delivering high double-digit growth in both value and volume, backed by robust underlying transaction growth across its key brands, he added.

Nestlé India Director Confectionery and Cereals Jagatheesan Gopichandar said KitKat's performance was driven by "increase in penetration and also entry into new consumer demand spaces" with innovations across mainstream and premium segments.

"We entered into gifting with KitKat Celebreak and nibbling with KitKat pops. We accelerated the premium portfolio with the launch of KITKAT Delights range with variants like Salted Caramel and Hazelnut, alongside mainstream innovations," he said.

Nestlé India increased advertising spends and rolled out partnerships aimed at strengthening brand relevance. —*PTI*

ICEYE to launch first Indian production facility within a year: CEO

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

ICEYE, a global leader in space-based intelligenceis set to establish its first Indian production facility within a year, manufacturing small satellites for defence, surveillance, and environmental monitoring.

CEO Rafal Modrzewski said the new hub will serve as the company's main manufacturing base for Asia-Pacific, complementing existing operations in Europe and the US. ICEYE's satellite constellations currently support defence, intelligence, insurance, and emergency sectors, amid rising geopolitical tensions.

Modrzewski noted that "India reflects both trends," with increasing defence spending and rapid adoption of space-based capabilities.

"Yes, it is fair to say that India could become our Asia-Pacific hub, alongside Europe and the United States," Modrzewski said.

He added that space assets are becoming the primary source of intelligence, with ICEYE manufacturing small satellites at scale, providing ground infrastructure and training to global clients.

The company plans to produce around 10 satellites in the first year, scaling up to 20–40 annually, with significant investment — likely in the tens of millions of dollars. ICEYE owns the world's most advanced SAR satellite constellation and aims to make India its Asia-Pacific hub.

The plan is to establish a supply chain and manufacturing facility within 6–12 months, recognising India's large skilled workforce and growing economy.

ICEYE already has Indian clients and is in talks with government departments, exploring collaborations with ISRO, private manufacturers, and defence players. —*PTI*

Di Giannantonio wins Catalan MotoGP Grand Prix

PARIS, 17 MAY

Ducati rider Fabio Di Giannantonio won a crash-hit Catalunya MotoGP on Sunday, with Alex Marquez taken to the hospital after being thrown off his bike. The race was red-flagged twice, first after Pedro Acosta's bike cut out and Marquez made contact with him, leaving the Ducati-Gresini rider's bike destroyed in a heavy crash. At the first corner after the restart, French rider Johann Zarco crashed, forcing the race to be red-flagged again before it resumed with 12 laps remaining. Acosta started on pole and led until Di Giannantonio took the lead with two laps remaining.—*PTI*

Rugby 7s: Indian men win silver; women finish fourth

TASHKENT, 17 MAY

India's senior men's team secured the silver medal while the women's side finished fourth at the inaugural CASA (Central Asia and South Asia) Rugby 7s 2026 held here, marking a positive start to the international season for the country. The men's team impressed throughout the tournament, winning four consecutive matches to book their place in the final. India opened their campaign with victories against hosts Uzbekistan (24-12), Kyrgyzstan (31-0), Mongolia (26-14), and Pakistan (20-14), remaining unbeaten until their final round-robin fixture against Sri Lanka (12-33).—*PTI*

Avani Prashanth struggles in third round

HAMBURG, 17 MAY

India's Avani Prashanth endured a difficult third round, carding an 81 to slip down the leaderboard at the 2026 Amundi German Masters on the Ladies European Tour.

After showing impressive resilience earlier in the week, the young Indian golfer struggled in challenging weather conditions during moving day at the Green Eagle Golf Courses near Hamburg.

Avani had opened the tournament with a 78 but bounced back brilliantly in the second round with a superb four-under 69 to comfortably make the cut. She was the lone Indian to make the cut, as Pranavi Urs missed the cut by one shot and Vani Kapoor withdrew after a first-round 83.—*PTI*

PTI

Super Chess Classic: Pragg draws with Keymer

BUCHAREST, 17 MAY

Indian GM R Praggnanandhaa played out a draw with Vincent Keymer of Germany to stay in joint lead after the third round of the Super Chess Classic, part of the Grand Chess Tour. After a well-deserved victory over Javokhir Sindarov of Uzbekistan in the previous round, Praggnanandhaa took his tally to two points out of a possible three. He now shares the lead with Maxime Vachier-Lagrave of France, the Dutch duo of Jorden Van Foreest and Anish Giri, along with Keymer. With half the field of ten players sharing the lead, Americans Fabiano Caruana and Wesley So have both drawn all their games to be on 1.5 points, while Iranian turned Frenchman Alireza Firouzja and local star Deac Bogdan-Daniel both have a half point apiece.—*PTI*

RCB secure IPL playoff berth

Punjab is suffering its sixth consecutive defeat after a great start to the season

DHARAMSALA, 17 MAY

Royal Challengers Bengaluru held their nerve and survived a late onslaught to edge out Punjab Kings by 23 runs to become the first team to secure an IPL playoffs berth with an all-round performance here on Sunday.

Venkatesh Iyer blasted a spectacular 40-ball 73 not out and powered RCB to 222 for four. Virat Kohli (58 off 37 balls), Devdutt Padikkal (45 off 25 balls) and Tim David (28 off 12) were the other significant contributors for RCB after they were asked to bat first.

In reply, PBKS were stopped at 199 for eight after Shashank Singh's valiant 56 off 27 balls, the home team suffering its sixth consecutive defeat after a great start to the season.

In a daunting chase of 223, the Punjab Kings endured a nervy start as the RCB's pace attack kept the batters under pressure in the first 10 overs.

PBKS were jolted early when veteran seamer Bhuvneshwar Kumar removed Priyansh Arya in the opening over, forcing the hosts on to the back foot immediately.

PBKS captain Shreyas Iyer during the presentation ceremony -*PTI*

Bengaluru's Venkatesh Iyer during the Indian Premier League T20 cricket match between Punjab Kings and Royal Challengers Bengaluru -*PTI*

With the required rate hovering around 11-an-over from the outset, Punjab's batters were compelled to attack, but RCB's disciplined bowling and sharp fielding denied the home side the momentum they were looking for.

Cooper Connolly and Prabhsimran Singh looked to counterattack with a few boundaries, but the visitors continued to chip away with timely breakthroughs.

Prabhsimran threw his bat at a Bhuvneshwar delivery way outside off, and the edge flew to Devdutt in the slips. Skipper Shreyas Iyer too bit the dust inside the Power Play.

PBKS suffered a 23-run defeat as RCB sealed their playoff berth with a composed performance under pressure. —*PTI*

I think the match was lost in powerplay: Shreyas Iyer

Punjab Kings skipper Shreyas Iyer admitted that his side lost their IPL match in the powerplay after an explosive start by Royal Challengers Bengaluru and early setbacks in a daunting chase of 223 here on Sunday.

KKR took a bit too long in figuring out right people in team: Green

KOLKATA, 17 MAY

All-rounder Cameron Green has admitted Kolkata Knight Riders took a bit too long in figuring out the right players for the right roles after the three-time IPL winners mounted a spirited comeback to remain in contention for the playoffs.

KKR outgunned the second-placed Gujarat Titans in a high-scoring contest here on Saturday, moving to the seventh position and keeping their hopes alive after a poor start to IPL 2026. KKR's win over GT by 29 runs here at the Eden Gardens was their fifth victory in their last six outings. Green, whose unavailability to bowl at the start of the season had caused some additional headache to KKR, especially after the squad was hit by a spate of injuries to key bowlers, said his side has eventually cracked the right balance.

Dhoni joins CSK training

Chennai Super Kings' IPL 2026 match against Sunrisers Hyderabad is not just a crucial fixture in its push for a playoff spot; it will also be the side's final home game of the season at the M. A. Chidambaram Stadium on Monday.

And if there weren't already enough reasons for fans to pack the Anbuden, the fixture could mark Dhoni's final outing at Chepauk as a player. —*PTI*

CSK host SRH in do-or-die match

CHENNAI, 17 MAY

Chennai Super Kings (CSK) will take on Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) in a must-win Match 63 of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026.

The clash will take place on Monday at the MA Chidambaram Stadium.

While the five-time champions own six wins and as many losses from 12 matches, SRH have won seven of their 12 games.

A loss for CSK in the upcoming game might end their playoff hopes.

Chidambaram Stadium in Match 63 of the 2026 Indian Premier League (IPL) on Monday.

The five-time champions

Ruturaj Gaikwad and Pat Cummins -*X/@IPL*

CSK VS SRH @ MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai
3.30 pm IST

CSK are coming off a heavy defeat against the Lucknow Super Giants at the Ekana Stadium, which halted their momentum and left them at sixth in the standings with 12 points from 12 matches. They find themselves in a tricky position and need to win their remaining two group games to stay alive in the playoff race. Sunrisers Hyderabad, on the other hand, are sitting more comfortably in third place with 14 points. —*PTI*

BCCI mulls converting U-23 50-over to T20 format

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is mulling converting the national Under-23 men's 50-over tournament to T20 format from the upcoming domestic season.

It is learnt that the BCCI is set to seek the opinion of state associations and other respected voices before effecting the change to the tournament, currently known as the State A Championship.

"It is still in the early stages, as opinions of state associations and a few other stakeholders will be asked before taking a call. But if it's done, then it will happen from the new domestic season (2026-27)," a source close to the development indicated to PTI.

Currently, the tournament is divided into Elite and Plate Divisions, as is the norm in Indian domestic cricket.

Tamil Nadu is the defending champion in the Elite section, while Meghalaya holds the Plate segment title.

The corresponding U23 red-ball tournament is being played for the Col CK Nayudu Trophy. —*PTI*

SECURE TOP-THREE FINISH

Manchester United score thrilling win against Nottingham Forest

MANCHESTER, 17 MAY

Manchester United rubber-stamped their third-placed finish in the Premier League (PL) thanks to a controversial 3-2 win against Nottingham Forest, which ended a run of four PL H2Hs without a win for the Red Devils.

With UEFA Champions League football assured, today was largely about giving Casemiro a send-off in his Old Trafford finale. The outgoing wasn't involved in United's flying start, but the hosts hit the front inside the opening five minutes when the Forest defence could only half clear Bruno Fernandes' cross, and Luke Shaw took one touch to settle himself before arrowing a half volley into the bottom corner - his first goal since January 2023 and United's fastest PL home goal in two years. Morgan Gibbs-White ought to have hit back for Forest midway through the half when he was freed in behind the United mistake, but a huge Senne Lammens save denied him an equaliser. —*PTI*

Manchester United staged a wild comeback in the Nottingham Forest game -*X/@MANCHESTERUNITED*

Max's hopes of winning ended due to a mechanical issue

NURBURG, 17 MAY

Four-time Formula 1 champion Max Verstappen's chances of victory in his 24-hour racing debut at the famed Nürburgring track have been ended by a mechanical issue with his car.

Verstappen had been leading Sunday morning by over half a minute, sharing a Mercedes AMG GT3 car with experienced sportscar racers Lucas Auer, Jules Gounon, and Dani Juncadella.

Juncadella had just taken over from Verstappen when he had to slow down with a damaged driveshaft and lost the lead before entering the pits, where the car was pulled into the garage.

Coming a week before F1 returns at the Canadian Grand Prix, the Nürburgring race was a "bucket list" project for Verstappen. He's a keen racing fan and has questioned his future in F1 this year because he's unhappy with the 2026 cars' reliance on electrical power. —*PTI*

2nd Test: Bangladesh lead by 156 runs on Stumps Day 2

SYLHET, 17 MAY

Bangladesh ruled the second day of the Sylhet Test, going to stumps with a healthy 156-run lead and only three wickets down in their second attempt. The home side were 110 for 3, losing Mominul Haque on what turned out to be the last ball of the day.

Before that, it was a strong showing from their bowlers who combined to restrict Pakistan to 232 for a lead of 46 runs in the first innings, before Mahmudul Hasan Joy led the second innings with a half-century to follow his duck in the first.

Pakistan's total would have been much less had it not been for Sajid Khan's big hitting towards the end of their innings. Babar Azam top-scored for Pakistan with 68 on his return to the playing XI following an injury, but he couldn't stem their struggles. Taskin removed the openers, Abdullah Fazal and Azan Awais, for 13 and 9 respectively, after he changed ends for a second spell that followed two wicketless overs early on.

Bangladesh 278 and 110 for 3 (Mahmudul 51, Mominul 30, Shahzad 2-19) lead Pakistan 232 (Babar 68, Saijd 38, Rana 3-60, Taijul 3-67) by 156 runs —*PTI*

PCB

THAILAND OPEN

Rankireddy-Chirag finish with silver

BANGKOK, 17 MAY

Star Indian pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty saved four championship points before going down fighting against Indonesia's Leo Rolly Carnando and Daniel Marthin in a gripping men's doubles final to finish runners-up at the Thailand Open Super 500 tournament here on Sunday, settling for silver. World No. 4 Satwik and Chirag, champions here in 2019 and 2024, looked off-colour in the opening game but showed great mental fortitude under pressure in the second to almost take the match to the decider before losing 12-21, 23-25 in a 53-minute summit clash.

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty with silver medal -*PTI*

It was another creditable finish for Satwik and Chirag, who have established themselves as India's most consistent doubles pair in recent years. For the Indian duo, who had missed some tournaments due to Satwik's shoulder injury, it was a third final appearance at the USD 475,000 event and their first of the season. They had also finished runners-up at the China Masters and Hong Kong Open last year.

Antonsen wins men's, and Yamaguchi clinches women's crown

Denmark's Anders Antonsen won the badminton men's singles final of the Thailand Open on Sunday, getting his revenge against homegrown Kunlavut Vitidsarn, who defeated the Dane last year.

World-ranked No. 3 Antonsen won 9-21, 24-22, 21-18 in 1 hour 37 minutes in Bangkok. —*PTI*

Svitolina upsets Gauff to win Italian Open thriller

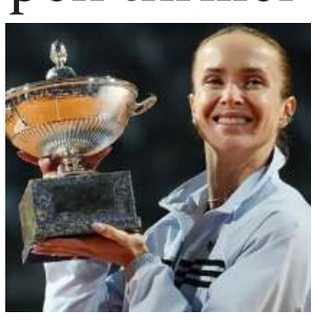
ROME, 17 MAY

Ukraine's Elina Svitolina battled to a third Italian Open title following a thrilling three-set win against Coco Gauff in the final.

The 31-year-old fought back from 4-2 down to win the first set and, despite losing the second on a tie-break, Svitolina responded to claim the decider for a 6-4 6-7 (3-7) 6-2 victory.

Her route to success in Rome has involved earning notable three-set wins against world number two Elena Rybakina, number three Iga Swiatek, and now Gauff, who is ranked fourth.

Svitolina, whose previous victories in the tournament came in 2017 and 2018, said: "It's very hard to believe it's been eight years since I had this trophy and very pleased with the two weeks here."



The world number 10 enjoyed a third successive victory against Gauff, having beaten the American in the quarter-finals of the Australian Open and semi-finals of the Dubai Tennis Championships. —*PTI*